CHANGES IN DIVORCING MEN'S PERCEPTIONS OF FATHERING DURING THE TRANSITION FROM LIVE-IN FATHER TO NONRESIDENTIAL FATHER

BY

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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

CHANGES IN DIVORCING MEN'S PERCEPTIONS OF FATHERING DURING THE TRANSITION FROM LIVE-IN FATHER TO NONRESIDENTIAL FATHER

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Divorce occurs in approximately 50% of families in this country. Fathers' involvement with their children after divorce has been shown to potentially attenuate the impact of divorce on children. Studies of divorced fathers have identified specific factors impacting their involvement with their children. However, few studies to date have explored how men's thinking about their involvement with their children can change when faced with the inevitable prospect of divorce. My study explored how divorced fathers' thought about their involvement with their children early in the divorce process, specifically between filing the petition and final judgment.

Two criteria were required for inclusion in this study. The men had to have papers filed with the court petitioning for divorce, with no final judgment yet made. The men also had to have at least one child between the ages of 5 and 12. Twelve men participated in this study. Ten of the participants were interviewed two times. After the first interview, the men were given a disposable camera to take pictures of what fathering meant to them. The second interview included a discussion of these pictures.

Analysis of the data using principles of grounded theory methodology generated two primary categories, labeled separation and coping strategies. Separation was defined as the physical and psychological condition that resulted from these men's leaving the residence of their children on initiation of the divorce process. Subcategories included factors contributing to the separation and the consequences of the separation on the fathers. Factors contributing to the separation were a) the divorce proper, b) the role of the mother, and c) the role of the court. Effects of the separation on the father included the properties of a) missing the children, b) loss of influence, c) displacement, and d) emotionality.

Coping strategies defined those behaviors and thoughts that men used to lessen the impact of the separation. Four

properties contributed to the formation of this category: a) determination, b) contact, c) justification, and d) accommodation.

Implications of these results for practice and policy included counseling with divorced fathers, structure and content of parenting/divorce education classes, and shaping public policy.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Approximately 50% of marriages now end in divorce and nearly half of these divorces involve children (Fields, 2000). It has also been reported that up to half of the children who have experienced the divorce of their parents have had no contact with their father within the past year, and of those who do have contact, only 1 of 6 has contact on a weekly basis (Furstenberg & Nord, 1985). More recently, King (1994) reported that approximately 31% of fathers eventually had no contact with their children after divorce, while Braver (1998) reported that 18 to 25% of men had no contact within 2 to 3 years after divorce.

The implications of these statistics are that a large portion of the population of this country will experience the disruption of their family as they once knew it to be, and a large number of children will experience the loss of (or a significant change in) their relationship with their fathers. This family disruption brings with it the possible experience of pain and loss that can accompany divorce.

My study was designed to understand more fully how this family disruption is experienced by fathers and how fathers rethink and redefine their role as fathers during divorce proceedings.

Statement of the Problem

Numerous authors have reported that men often experience adjustment problems after divorce. These problems can take the form of depression, loss of a sense of self, loneliness, or anxiety, to name but a few (Stone, 2001; Lehr & MacMillan, 2001; Hetherington & Tryon, 1989). Although the literature describing the impact of divorce on children varies greatly, there are strong indications that children of divorce are at risk for adjustment problems. Some examples of these problems are decreased academic performance, behavioral problems, and poor self-concept or sense of competence (Dreman & Shemi, 2004; Amato, 2001, 2000, 1993; Booth & Amato, 2001; Whiteside & Becker, 2000; Shapiro & Lambert, 1999; Amato & Gilbreth, 1999; Amato & Keith, 1991; Kelly, 1998; King, 1994).

What has also been suggested in the literature is that men's involvement with their children tends to decrease over time after a divorce, particularly after the first year of separation from the children (King & Heard, 1999, Kruk, 1991). A number of possible explanations for this

phenomenon have been posited, including men's sense of disenfranchisement from the family, mothers directly or indirectly restricting fathers' access to the children, the remarriage of one or both parents, and attempts to reduce conflict with the mother by limiting contact with the former spouse (King & Heard, 1999; Cooksey & Craig, 1998; Arendell, 1995). What is lacking in these and other possible explanations regarding decreased involvement is a better understanding of how men's perceptions of fathering might change as they make the transition from a live-in, bicustodial father to a noncustodial, nonresidential father; and how these shifting perspectives inform their fathering involvement. My study explored the process by which men renegotiate and redefine their multiple roles as fathers during the early stage of this family transition.

Significance of Study

My study provided an opportunity to better understand how men's perceptions of fathering change as a result of the divorce process. Inherent in my study was the assumption that perceptions of fathering would change. This assumption was based on previous findings by Arendell (1995), Kruk (1991), and Riessman (1990) who conducted extensive qualitative studies with fathers. Their results indicated that men's fathering behavior changes as a result

of the divorce process. Increased understanding of how men's thinking about and meanings of fathering shift during the divorce process, and thus how their behaviors as fathers change, could lead to more effective interventions with fathers. The need for this increased understanding is well documented (Frieman, 2003a). Such interventions could contribute to greater personal adjustment for fathers and increased positive involvement of fathers with their children after a divorce has occurred.

Insights gained from this study could be useful in three areas: a) counseling work with men after divorce, b) parenting classes or classes designed for divorcing parents with minor children, and c) with public-policy development. The first area is the counseling of men who may have difficulty adjusting to the changes in their lives as a result of their divorces. Numerous studies show that nonresidential fathers often experience emotional and/or psychological difficulties following divorce (Frieman, 2003b; Lehr & MacMillan, 2001; Stone, 2001). Increased understanding would offer more possible directions for conversation in counseling work.

The second area where this study might prove useful is in the structure and design of divorce or parenting classes. Two factors have been identified that lessen the

negative impact divorce can have on children: a more cooperative relationship between the parents, and continued involvement with the child, or children, by both parents (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Pruett & Pruett, 1998; Arendell, 1995; Ahrons, 1994). Several court jurisdictions nationwide have implemented mandatory parenting or divorce education classes before granting a divorce to couples with minor children, most with the goal of improving the co-parental relationship and ensuring continued involvement by both parents.

Divorce classes currently offered acknowledge a change in relationship as a result of divorce. These classes have a primary goal of helping parents and children cope with divorce (Geasler and Blaisure, 1998; Salem, Shepard & Schlissel, 1996). Effectiveness of such classes varies. Reasons for this variation include level of conflict between the parents, timing of attendance in relation to the divorce, and structure and content of the classes (Douglas, 2004, Arbuthnot & Gordon, 1996; Gleasner & Blaisure, 1998). Structure and content of the classes is where knowledge gained from my study could prove helpful. As noted above, content and teaching strategies have been shown to impact the effectiveness of such classes. Increased knowledge gained from this study could prove

useful in designing or redesigning classes in ways that might help men's adjustment after divorce, improve men's approach to the co-parenting relationship, and increase men's positive involvement with their children following divorce.

The third area is public policy. Policy and law regarding divorce should stem from a framework that (to the greatest degree possible) frees all family members of bitterness, anger, and anxiety that can result from the process of divorce. Such a framework can be better constructed only with a better understanding of how the dissolution process affects all parties involved. My study could contribute a better understanding of how men reflect on and react to the dissolution of their marriage, and how this informs their fathering role.

Primary Research Question

My study addressed the question "How do divorcing men's perceptions of fathering change during the transition from live-in, bi-custodial father; to noncustodial, nonresidential father?" I narrowed the transition period to that time between filing a petition for divorce and the final judgment dissolving the marriage. Although this same question could also be addressed in regard to mothers, a decision was made to limit the study to examining fathers'

experiences for two reasons. First, fathers are more likely to be in the non-residential role. Fewer than 15% of divorced fathers have primary residential custody of their children (Fields, 2000). Second, I chose fathers because I assume that we know less about fathers than about mothers. Lupton and Barclay (1997) report that psychological research literature regarding mothers and motherhood outnumbered similar works on fathers and fatherhood by a ratio of 4 to 1. Their review of the sociological literature found the margin of difference to be 13 to 1. Despite a recent trend toward more research on fatherhood (e.g., from 2001 through 2004, four issues of the Journal of Marriage and the Family had articles under a subsection titled "Fatherhood"), the amount of research literature on fatherhood remains limited. According to Catlett and McKenry (2004), research is particularly needed that would add to the understanding of the "...understudied context of men in divorce transition..." (p. 167). My study would contribute to that understanding, particularly focusing on the period of transition from the time the divorce petition has been filed but prior to a final judgment by the court.

Research Paradigm

Symbolic interactionism was chosen as the theoretical framework for my study. This choice was based on the idea that symbolic interactionism offers a "...theory about human behavior and an approach to inquiry about human conduct...." (Annells, 1996, p380). It is a framework chosen by other authors (Marsiglio, 2004; Arendell, 1995) seeking to highlight the cognitive aspects of the phenomenon being studied.

This framework fits well with my personal approach to therapy, which is grounded in critical and post-structural modes of discourse that reflect post-modern thinking. This complement of theoretical framework and practice was important, since the intent of my study was to begin generating a substantive theory about . noncustodial/nonresidential fathers' experiences that would offer alternative approaches to counseling or psycho-education for fathers who are going through the divorce process. I briefly address how this fit occurs after summarizing symbolic interactionism. I then discuss how symbolic interactionism, as an approach to inquiry fits with grounded theory (my choice of research methodology).

Symbolic Interactionism

The term symbolic interactionism was originated by Herbert Blumer (1969), who expanded the ideas of George Herbert Mead. Blumer's theory of symbolic interactionism is based on three premises. First, people respond to things (e.g., people, objects, concepts) according to the meanings the things have for them. Second, the meanings people attach to things are the result of social interactions with other people. Third, how a person applies these meanings is the result of a process of interpretation.

Blumer further suggests there are two parts to this interpretation process. Initially, a person considers which of the targets of the action have meaning for her/him. This amounts to an internalized discussion in which the person is interacting with herself/himself. The next step is the handling of meanings as a result of these internalized social processes (discussions), in which the person considers the meaning in the context of the current situation and possible action to be taken. This process of interpretation is not the automatic use of meanings previously established, but instead a "...formative process in which meanings are used and revised as instruments for the guidance and formation of action" (Blumer, 1969, p.5). It is important to recognize that meanings influence action

through a process of self-interaction. This makes the person a factor in an action as opposed to an object in a cause-and-effect relationship.

In contrast, the current research literature on fatherhood is based mainly on examples of "cause and effect" or linear research paradigms. The extensive review by Pleck (in Lamb, 1997), reflects the preponderance of this approach. Research based on the ideas of symbolic interactionism reflects the view that given factors may influence or inform action, but that these factors do not produce action. Action is instead the result of an interaction (of factors) and interpretation by the individual.

Blumer (1969) suggested that society consists of people engaging in action, and/or interaction. The result of these social interactions is what we refer to as culture. This is contrary to the idea that culture is the determining factor in how interactions occur. Placing social interactions (including self-interactions) above culture or other factors in determining action allows a role for the self in these processes.

The self in these instances is reflective of the self envisioned by Mead (Blumer, 1969), and is a process, as opposed to a static or inherent structure in one's

consciousness. This self is a main player in Blumer's concept of the nature of human action. He believes that a person (self), when confronted by a situation, will interpret the situation before he or she acts. Again, this is contrary to the idea of the person just responding to the situation, as implied in much of the current research on fathering. This should not be construed as an isolated decision in meaning-making and resulting action. Referring back to Blumer's ideas, in any given situation the person/self makes interpretations based on meanings that are a result of interactions and interpretations accumulated over his/her lifetime, with the relevance of this history determined by the current situation.

Applying these theoretical assumptions (Blumer's three basic premises) to my study further clarifies these ideas. The first premise suggests that men will approach divorce and fathering after divorce with preconceived notions based on the meanings they individually attribute to concepts such as divorce, visitation, and absent or noncustodial/nonresidential fathering. These meanings will be a contributing influence on how men act as fathers through the transition period and beyond.

The second premise suggests that these meanings are the result of interactions with others, over the course of

one's life; such as being fathered and/or providing fathering. Previous interactions will likely include those among persons such as a man's own father, the mother of their children, and his peers. Other prior interactions could include those at religious institutions, schools, or the workplace. Further, fathers have ongoing interactions with various people or institutions that will continue to influence their constructions of meaning. These current interactions could include those with the former partner, the children, attorneys, the courts, peers, and possibly divorce-class personnel and participants. Any of these past and present interactions can affect the meanings men attach to fathering and fathering behaviors.

The third premise of symbolic interactionism suggests that men will engage in an internal dialogue that considers the implications of ongoing interactions and incorporates meanings derived from previous interactions. The results of this internal dialogue or self-interaction will determine how fathers decide to act (i.e., how fathering should be post divorce) as they make the transition in parenting status.

Symbolic interactionism presents life as a dynamic, ever-changing phenomenon. The implications are that individuals and society are perpetually in a state of

either potential or actual change by virtue of ongoing interactions, with the resultant potential for any of these interactions to change meanings for persons or groups of persons. Blumer's discussion of group life and the nature of social interaction bring to mind Berger and Luckman's ideas of the changeability of social reality (1967). Berger and Luckman discussed the process of reification as a group dynamic of accepting something as reality. Similarly, Blumer might say if the interactions or interpretations of enough persons lead to group 'action' this becomes the reality of that group of people (their culture or society). However, Berger and Luckman's discussion allows for a change in reality (a new reification) when people's thinking shifts in new directions. Blumer clearly shares this view of reality as a shifting phenomenon.

This dynamic shifting reality fits well with my narrative, post-modern approach to therapy; and with my beliefs of how people can change their behaviors, and their lives, as a result of shifting their perceptions of their life situations. Narrative therapists value the individual's contributions to problem definition and the generation of solutions (i.e., the role of the self in symbolic interactionism). Through open discourse with

clients, narrative therapies seek to explore alternative stories with people, thus opening the possibility of new meanings. The intent is to help people deconstruct meanings or stories that influence their lives and assist in creating alternative meanings or stories that can change how they live their lives (Anderson, 1997; Freedman & Combs, 1996; Eron & Lund, 1996; White & Epston, 1990). Increased understanding of how men create or recreate their stories of fathering during the divorce process could help them shift their perspectives in ways that could benefit them and their children.

Methodological Framework

My study was qualitative in nature, and was based on grounded theory strategies. Grounded theory methodology was originally proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967); and further clarified by Glaser (1978), and Strauss and Corbin (1990). This method is intended to discover theory through systematic analysis of collected data. Grounded theory fits well with symbolic interactionism, the theoretical paradigm for this study. Blumer (1969 referred to symbolic interaction as an "empirical social science...designed to yield verifiable knowledge of human group life and human conduct" (p.21). Empirical social scienceuses, "...naturalistic study..." [that] "..respects and stays

close to the empirical domain which it intends to explore" (p.46). This thinking is echoed by Hutchinson when describing grounded theory as research that "...goes beyond existent theories and preconceived conceptual frameworks in search of new understandings of social processes in natural settings" (Hutchinson, in Sherman and Webb, 1988, p.123).

Glaser and Strauss believed that generating theory that is grounded in data would be best suited to practical application. They identified five interrelated jobs of theory: a) to enable prediction and explanation of behavior; b) to be useful in theoretical advance in sociology; c) to be usable in practical applications--prediction and explanation should be able to give the practitioner understanding and some control of situations; d) to provide a perspective on behavior--a stance to be taken toward data; and e) to guide and provide a style for research on particular areas of behavior (Glaser and Straus 1967)

In my study I was most interested in the prediction and explanation of behavior, and how it may have practical application in the structure and process of working with men experiencing a divorce. If we can better predict how men interpret their changing roles as a father and respond to these changes, and better explain post-divorce behaviors

regarding men's involvement with their children, we can develop strategies that would enable teachers, counselors, and other stakeholders to promote or enhance parental cooperation and involvement with children in bi-custodial parental arrangements. To this end, developing a theory grounded in data gathered from men who are experiencing the early stage of divorce (i.e., men who are processing the divorce experience and adjusting to their changed roles as a father) was the purpose of this study.

Definitions

Fathering: In this study fathering referred to the activities that are a part of men's involvement with their biological children. This definition was not intended to elevate the status of biological fathers in comparison to step-fathers or men who are in the fathering role as a result of co-habiting relationships. The definition merely reflects the participants in the study (i.e., men currently experiencing a divorce) and efforts to keep the sample pool homogenous.

Involvement: This term referred to the interactions and activities, both physical and mental, that men have with their children. It was based on the definitions of involvement posited by Lamb et al. (1985), and Palkovitz (1997). Palkovitz's expanded definition of involvement

specifically included cognitive and affective domains in addition to a behavioral domain. This was important in this study because changes in thinking and feeling were what I was attempting to identify. A more in-depth discussion of involvement is given in the "Father Involvement in Parenting" section of Chapter 2.

Process: Process has been defined as a "systematic series of actions directed to some end" (Webster, 1996). In my study, the "series of actions" is the thinking, reflecting, modifying, renegotiating and redefining encompassed in men's changing meanings of fathering during the early stage of the divorce process. Data were analyzed with sensitivity to cognitive and behavioral actions. Process in my study also included the multiple aspects of men's relationships to their children, including related processes such as interactions with the birth mother or grandparents. ("Basic Social Process" in Chapter 3 further discusses process.)

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to explore the way men reflect on and re-think their roles as fathers during the divorce process. This study was based on two assumptions. First, it was assumed that when men experiencing divorce are faced with the prospect of no longer living with their children on a full time basis, the way they think about fathering and the meanings they attribute to fatherhood change. Second, since research has demonstrated that fathers' post-divorce adjustment and involvement can impact children's adjustment to divorce, it was assumed that increased understanding of the changes in men's thinking would have relevance to men undergoing this family transition, and to their children. This increased understanding of fathers' thinking could be useful to professionals wishing to intervene to lessen the negative impact of divorce on fathers and their children. Therefore, this review focused on four bodies of literature. The first area is the literature on fathers' involvement in childrearing. This includes a general summary of the research literature on the nature of

father's involvement in childrearing. The second area of literature reviewed concerns the impact of divorce on fathers. In this section, recent literature addressing both personal adjustment of fathers and fathers' involvement with their children post divorce was examined. The third area focuses on the literature describing the impact of divorce on children. Literature describing the impact of fathers' involvement on children's adjustment to divorce will also be reviewed in this section. Literature supporting the selection of a qualitative methodology used in this study is the final area reviewed.

Father Involvement in Parenting

A frequent concept used to define or measure fatherhood is involvement. Historically involvement has been measured predominantly by time studies. These studies usually requested that parents (mostly the mothers) estimate the time fathers spend interacting with children (Hofferth et al, 2003; Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004; Pleck, 1997). In an effort to broaden the parameters of involvement, Lamb, Pleck, Charnov & Levine (1985) identified three components that define involvement: a) engagement; b) accessibility; and c) responsibility. Engagement is defined as those activities or times when the parent is interacting with a child in a direct manner.

Accessibility is that time when the parent is available to the child, such as being in one room while the child plays in the same or an adjacent room. Responsibility is more difficult to define. It generally refers to the parent being accountable for the child's welfare. This type of involvement would include behaviors such as the making and keeping of doctors' appointments, providing clothing, and school/education arrangements and activities. McBride (1989), sums up responsibility as an awareness of the child's various social, emotional, cognitive and physical needs, and the ability to take steps necessary to help meet those needs.

Palkovitz (1997) takes an even more expansive view of involvement. He offered his model to help combat the deficit perspective of fatherhood (Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997). He begins by proposing six misconceptions about involvement: a) more is better; b) involvement requires proximity; c) involvement can always be observed or counted; d) involvement levels are static and therefore concurrently and prospectively predictive; e) patterns of involvement should look the same across culture, subculture or social class; and f) women are more involved with children than men.

Palkovitz suggests that the first of these misconceptions does not take into account women's possible reactions to increased men's involvement, or in what way a father is involved (e.g., an abusive father). Nor does it consider the child's developmental issues. The second and third misconceptions limit involvement to behaviors only. Palkovitz's model addresses these shortcomings by viewing involvement as having three domains; cognitive, affective and behavioral. Although the idea of a cognitive and affective component to involvement can be seen in the construct of involvement levels proposed by Lamb and associates, Palkovitz specifically identifies the addition of a cognitive and affective domain in order to acknowledge a more internal, or 'self', response to varying situations encountered in parenting. The fourth misconception ignores family developmental issues and life course factors. The fifth misconception ignores the existence of cultural diversity, clearly contrary to social constructionist thinking. Finally, the sixth misconception results from a limited view of involvement, since we really do not know the extent of the discrepancy of involvement between men and women in childrearing until we begin to look at involvement through a wider lens.

Additionally, Palkovitz suggests four factors which can moderate or modify parental involvement. These are: a) temporal fluctuations, b) overall context, c) specific context of involvement (e.g. sole responsibility vs. shared responsibility), and d) individual differences (e.g. style and personality, history).

Palkovitz's expanded definition of involvement is significant because it offers nonresidential fathers the ability to see themselves as connected to their children in situations where direct contact may be limited. It also affords men the ability to recognize they do have the potential to impact their children's lives, despite limited contact.

The multiple forces acting on fathers to shape their definitions of fatherhood, and thus their involvement, have been categorized into four areas: a) motivation, b) skills and self confidence, c) social supports and stresses, and d) institutional factors and practices. These four categories were initially defined by Lamb and associates (1985). Pleck (1997) used the four categories developed by Lamb and associates to help organize an extensive review of the literature on father involvement. Following is a brief summary of some of his findings. It should be noted that the majority of the research reviewed, and the literature

on father involvement, has been done on intact families. Translating these findings to divorced, nonresidential fathers must be done cautiously.

Research on Motivation

Motivation to parent may begin to take shape early. The involvement of a man with his own father can have an impact on how a man responds to his own role as a father (Radin, 1994; Daly, 1993; Gerson, 1993). This can be either positive or negative modeling, and a man's response can also be in either direction (e.g., a man may react to an absent or uninvolved father by increasing or decreasing his own involvement). Early socialization processes also affect men's definition of their role as a father (Gerson, 1993). A man who grew up with brothers and/or sisters, or who spent time babysitting, may view children differently than would a man who had no such experiences. Marital history can also impact a man's motivation to be an involved father. There is evidence that positive marital satisfaction can translate into more positive paternal involvement. On the other side, marital discord can have a negative impact on fathering.

Closely tied to marital history is proximal socialization. Examples of proximal socialization would be men's involvement in the preparation for the arrival of the

child (e.g., reading books on childcare), attendance at the birth, taking days off work following the birth. Early involvement in the preparation can be viewed as indications of men's motivation to parent, or this early involvement may serve to help motivate men to be involved (Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004). These latter examples can be influenced by the marital relationship.

The impact of children's age on father involvement is inconclusive. There are examples of research indicating age is a factor (e.g., Pleck, 1997). However, recently Amato and Sobolewski (2004) report a number of studies with mixed results. Additional research in this area appears warranted.

Research on Skills and Self Confidence

It has been shown that men who perceive themselves as competent as fathers will have increased involvement with their children (Barush & Barnett, 1986; McHale & Huston, 1984). It has also been shown that efforts to increase men's parenting skills can result in increased involvement (McBride, 1989). According to Pleck and Masciadrelli (2004), recent review of the literature in this area confirms the influence of skills and self confidence on involvement.

The research regarding fathering, as regards single fathers in particular, has reached the conclusion that men have the ability to parent. Greif (1985) surveyed via mail over one thousand single fathers. From their responses he determined that men can grow confident in their ability to parent their children. Similarly, work by Risman (1986) also indicated that men can feel skillful as parents. Unfortunately, several forces may work against men feeling confident about their ability to successfully parent their children. For instance, our society has historically been relatively devoid of role models for men's parenting. Closer to home, mothers may act, directly or indirectly, to limit fathers' involvement with their children, either fathers living in the home as well as absent or non-custodial fathers. This idea of gatekeeper moms has been suggested as a restricting influence on men's involvement (Fagan & Barnett, 2003; Allen & Hawkins, 1999; Braver, 1998; Carroad, 1994; Meyerhoff, 1994). The concept of gatekeeper moms will be discussed further in the following section on social supports.

Research on Social Supports and Stresses

According to Pleck's (1997) review, the marital system plays a large role in the area of social support and stress. The concept used in the literature to describe

mothers' influence in limiting paternal involvement in intact families is gatekeeper mothers. This term has also been used in the literature on father involvement following divorce. As noted above, the term refers to a mother's efforts, conscious or unconscious, to limit a father's involvement with his children. Arendell (1995) and Gerson (1993) carried out qualitative studies with divorced fathers and reported these men often felt that their children's mothers behaved in ways that blocked or limited access to their children. Similarly, Kruk (1991) surveyed 80 non-custodial fathers and reported that many of these men felt they had limited involvement with their children as a result of structural constraints imposed by the children's mothers.

A mother/wife's employment appears to have an impact on the father's involvement, but the literature is inconclusive. The studies reviewed by Pleck (1997) indicate there may be an increase in paternal involvement in comparison to mothers' involvement, but there was no consistent finding regarding an absolute increase in paternal involvement.

In addition, mothers' characteristics such as age and level of education may be important (Goldscheider & Waite, 1991). There is evidence to show that increased age and/or

level of education of mothers results in increased support for the father being involved.

A mothers' relationship with her own father also appears to influence her view of paternal involvement, though Pleck reports that the evidence to support this is weak (Radin, 1994).

Marital dynamics come into play when considering support and stresses, but as with motivation there is the question of whether the nature of the relationship dynamics lends support or creates stress in regards to paternal involvement. For example, Blair and associates (1994) and McBride and Mills (1993) reported higher paternal involvement with good marital adjustment, while others (Gerson, 1993) reported increasing paternal involvement with poor marital adjustment. Other support systems, such as men's relationships with friends and other male networks, may also impact fathering styles. However, it appears that men get little support from other men, and perhaps have increased stress as a result. Recent research indicates that social support systems continue to have an impact on non-residential fathers, in both positive and not so positive ways (Bailey and Zvonkovic, 2003).

Research on Institutional Factors and Practices

Characteristics of a father's employment context can promote or limit a father's involvement. This may be a result of the labor market or corporate/work culture influence. For example, workplace policies can have an impact on work-family conflicts, with policies such as flex time or four day work weeks shown to increase fathers' involvement (Volling & Belsky, 1991).

Legal institutions may also have an impact on involvement. For instance, the judicial system will have an impact on involvement of divorced or unmarried fathers by virtue of decisions made by the courts regarding issues such as custody and visitation. Court appointed mediators and attorneys may also impact the amount and manner of visitation or shared custody a father may be granted.

Impact of Divorce on Fathers

The complexities of fatherhood bring an inherent need for men to make adjustments throughout the life course (Goodnough & Lee, 1996). The impact of divorce can add to these adjustment issues. A number of researchers over the past three decades have reported both physical and mental problems for divorced men (Freiman, 2003a, 2003b; Hetherington, Cox & Cox, 1979; Jacobs, 1982; Pruett & Pruett, 1998; Lehr & MacMillan, 2001; Wu & Hart, 2002).

Hetherington and Tryon (1989), researchers of divorce, summarized their impressions of divorce in their article on "His and Her" divorces. In this article they discussed the increase in men's psychological symptoms following divorce. They also noted that men often report an increase in their sense of the value of marriage and family after divorce. Furthermore, they concluded men may feel rootless and struggle with self-identity issues. These same authors additionally addressed the idea that among divorced men a "...pervasive concern …is the sense of loss of their children." (p.60).

Hetherington and Tyron's comments are consistent with findings from earlier research on fathers' experience after divorce. Jacobs (1982), in his review of the literature to date, reported divorced men felt "shut out" and "rootless", and experienced a sense of loss of their children. More recently, Stone (2001) surveyed 124 men who had been divorced an average of three years to determine the impact of divorce on their well-being. He reported that after divorce many of the fathers had a sense of decreased role clarity and increased difficulty in psychological adjustment. In particular, noncustodial fathers reported problems with self-esteem, depression, and anxiety. Lehr & MacMillan (2001), and Hetherington, Cox & Cox (1979) also

discussed problems for men in the areas of self-esteem and self-concept. Lehr & MacMillan (2001) performed group interviews with a total of 18 noncustodial fathers. In addition to the aforementioned findings regarding self-esteem and self-concept, they also reported other stress related symptoms such as sleeplessness, crying, decreased energy and fatigue, and loss of appetite. Health issues were also reported by Pruett & Pruett (1998), who related these health issues for men, along with stress and psychological strain, to lack of involvement with their children. Jacobs (1982) also reported physical symptoms such as weight loss and headaches.

A common theme among men reporting problems was the belief that the court system was in part responsible for their difficulties. Arendell (1995) referred to this phenomenon as the "...paradigm of victimization..." (p.102). In her qualitative study of approximately 100 divorced men, she found a recurrent perception of victimization and loss of rights as a father. This is similar to the findings of Lehr & Macmillan (2001). As noted earlier, these researchers conducted group interviews with 18 non-custodial fathers. They reported these men frequently felt disenfranchised as a result of the court system's rulings on visitation.

Impact of Divorce on Children

Although the literature addressing the impact of divorce on children varies significantly, there are consistent indications that children are at risk for adjustment problems following divorce or separation of their parents. These problems might include decreased academic performance, behavioral problems, and lowered self-concept or sense of competence (self-efficacy) (Whiteside & Becker, 2000; Amato, 2001, 2000, 1993; Amato & Gilbreth 1999; Kelly, 1998; King, 1994). Wallerstein and Kelly (1980), in one of the well known early studies on divorce, the authors interviewed members of 60 families over a 5 year period. They concluded that regular and frequent visitation by the nonresidential parent (usually the father) could help increase children's self-esteem and ward off depression. Jacobs (1982) reviewed the literature to date on divorce and drew similar conclusions. He surmised from his review that visitation or access would equal less distress in children of divorce. From his review he also identified as potential problems decreased self-esteem, depression, aggression, decreased school performance, and anti-social activities. More recent studies have shown similar results. Kelly (1998) reviewed the literature regarding children's adjustment to divorce.

Although she found mixed results, she did find indications of potential problems with anger and aggression, sadness and depression, decreased academic performance, anti-social behavior and decreased concentration. More current work continues to indicate potential problems. Sun and Li (2002) used data from the National Education Longitudinal Study to look at children's adjustment at four time points over a 6 year period. Their results indicated that children might have poorer academic performance, lower self-esteem, lower self-efficacy and lower educational aspirations. Sandler and co-workers (2000) looked at the impact of coping efficacy (i.e., self-efficacy) in 356 children of divorce aged 9 to 12. They concluded that children could have psychological adjustment difficulties which would manifest in areas such as problem solving and decision making, and wishful thinking (e.g. wanting the parents to reunite).

There are two primary ways that nonresident fathers' involvement with their children can impact the child's adjustment to divorce. The first of these is the nature of the involvement the father has with his children. The second is the amount and intensity of conflict between the parents. A better understanding of men's experiences in both these areas could be useful in designing

parenting/divorce classes. Increased understanding could also inform the creation of therapeutic interventions for men who chose to work with a counselor, and possibly for counselors who may be working with children of divorce. Improved effectiveness in either of these arenas could have a positive influence on fathers' involvement with their children.

Fathers whose involvement includes maintaining more direct contact with their children can influence the child's well-being and adjustment via continued emotional support, practical help such as training and instructing, supervision, and providing material resources (King, 1994; Amato, Loomis & Booth, 1995). This contact may be face to face, over the telephone, or through mail or e-mail. Although contact is important, King (1994), in reviewing the literature for her study, identified a common theme in the literature: the quality of contact is more important than quantity of contact.

Whiteside and Becker (2000) reviewed the literature addressing children under age six experiencing divorce. They concluded that a warm, authoritative parenting style worked best to promote positive outcomes for children. Authoritative parenting is characterized by "...parental acceptance, inductive discipline, non-punitive punishment

practices, and consistency in childrearing..." (Gray & Steinberg, 1999, p.574). This is in contrast to authoritarian parenting which is characterized more by a demand for complete obedience, a more harsh style of parenting. Their findings supported the premise that there should be less focus on overnights (i.e., amount of direct contact) and more focus on the nature of the involvement. This echoed earlier work (Tschann, et al, 1990) that concluded consistency in discipline as part of a warm, empathic (i.e., authoritative) relationship between father and child was helpful in reducing behavioral problems.

The second manner in which fathers can impact their child's adjustment to divorce involves the level of conflict between him and the mother after the divorce. Tscann and associates (1990) studied 184 families of divorce and concluded conflict was the greatest predictor of children's adjustment. Amato and Rezac (1994), using data on over 1200 children from the National Survey of Families and Households, found that if the nonresidential parent's contact included conflict with the residential parent, the results could be detrimental to children's adjustment. Additionally, in interviews with 471 adult children of divorce, Amato and associates (1995) concluded that conflict between the parents is a factor in adjustment

for children. Recent work has begun to look at the impact of pre-divorce conflict, as well as post-divorce contact, as a factor in children's adjustment to divorce (Sun & Li, 2002).

The general acceptance of conflict as a factor in children's adjustment following divorce can be seen in the focus of the self-help literature available to persons experiencing divorce. This literature is based on research (Ahrons, 1994), personal experience (Ross & Corcoran, 1996), or professional experience (Ricci, 1997; Long & Forehand, 2002; Thayer & Zimmerman, 2001). All these works stress the importance of parents resolving conflict as a critical step toward helping their children adjust to divorce.

The research on impact of the pre-divorce relationship a father had with his children is not definitive. Hetherington and Kelly (2002) found pre-divorce involvement was not a good predictor of father involvement after the divorce. These authors acknowledged those fathers whose involvement did not change as a result of the divorce. They also identified "divorce activated fathers" (those men who increased involvement after a divorce), as well as "divorce deactivated fathers" (men who had less involvement after a divorce.

The more recent research on the impact of divorce on children has tended to indicate that the problem may not be as significant as one believed. Hetherington and Kelly (2002) argued the negative effects of divorce had been somewhat exaggerated and that most children do adjust and show no long term problems. However, the above review indicates the potential for problems does exist, warranting further research which could lead to information useful in taking steps to further lessen the risk of divorce for children.

The Value of Qualitative Research

There are several examples of qualitative work on fathering. The work of Walzer (1996) on the "mental labor" of baby care and how the parental division of this labor can influence children's gender differentiation is one example. Walzer used interview data from 25 couples to determine that there were three types of mental labor involved in baby care, and that women were more involved in this mental labor than were men. What is missing from this work is an attempt to determine the process by which men become less involved with their children, or women more involved. Some factors were identified (e.g., gender socialization influences), but no attempt was made to learn how men or women process (integrate and assimilate) these

factors in determining their roles. Similarly, Daly (1993) interviewed 27 fathers in his work on role models for fatherhood. However, his findings do not appear to address the process men use to arrive at their response to role models, and what other factors impact that response.

Another example of qualitative research on fatherhood is the 1994 study by White. White studied the way men's meanings of fatherhood and recollections of the type of fathering they received come together to influence men's definitions of fatherhood. This study demonstrates the potential for qualitative research to identify the processes by which men arrive at the meanings which guide their behavior. Other examples of qualitative research that address fathering include Arendell's (1995) study of divorced fathers, Lupton and Barcley's (1997) study of first time parents, and Riessman's (1990) work on divorce (note: Riessman began her study as a more traditional quantitative work using interview data, but felt her study evolved toward a qualitative study).

Qualitative models can incorporate fathers' reactions to factors which inform their style of fathering (i.e., the operationalization of his definition of fathering). This openness to a broader range of influences in more subjective arenas (e.g., level of conflict with the mother

or sense of closeness to children) is necessary if researchers are to learn more about how men respond to and integrate these multiple influences into their definition of their fathering. However, the work to date has typically focused on men's reactions to sources of influence, rather than on how men process and integrate these influences. This focus may be the result of the researcher's decision as to where to place emphasis along the continuum that is the divorce experience (e.g., initial separation through years after the divorce). In contrast to quantitative research, which looks at cause and effect (end result) work in the qualitative arena shifts the focus towards the process that led to that end result. As such it tends to emphasize some aspect of the process, and draws conclusions, or ends. The study reported in this paper was an effort to discover more about how men process the multiple factors that influence how they define their fathering roles during the initial stage of the divorce experience.

Summary of Key Findings

This literature review has established that men's involvement with their children is changed by divorce, with this change frequently being in the direction of less involvement. The literature also has shown that men can

have personal adjustment difficulties with divorce, and that these difficulties may impact the father-child relationship. Furthermore, this review points out how children can be affected by divorce, and how father involvement can inform those effects. The review also points out the emphasis to date on quantitative work. As stated earlier, this emphasis on cause and effect type research does not adequately address the more subtle aspects of what men experience during the divorce process.

It is my belief that an understanding of the changes in men's thinking about fathering, in the early stages of divorce, is important. This understanding is necessary if interventions are to be effective in promoting men's involvement with their children. It is also my belief that qualitative research is the most effective way to learn more about men's thinking, thus establishing the need for more qualitative work in the area of divorced fathers.

Chapter 3
Methodology

The design of this study was qualitative in nature, specifically employing the principles of grounded theory methodology. Grounded theory fits well with symbolic interactionism, the theoretical framework for this study. Blumer (1969), in discussing symbolic interactionism, refers to it as an "empirical social science...designed to yield verifiable knowledge of human group life and human conduct" (p.21). Blumer further stated that empirical social science should employ, "...naturalistic study..." which "...respects and stays close to the empirical domain which it intends to explore" (p.46). This thinking is echoed by Hutchinson (1988) in describing grounded theory as research that "...goes beyond existent theories and preconceived conceptual frameworks in search of new understandings of social processes in natural settings" (Hutchinson, 1988, p.123).

According to Hutchinson (1988), basic to the grounded theory method is the importance of discovery of the core variable in the study, the basic social-psychological process. The basic social-psychological process is one of

two components of the basic social process, or BSP (Glaser, 1978). (The other being the basic social structural process, which was not addressed in this study). The idea of the basic social process comes from Glaser (1978). In discussing the basic social process, Glaser (1978) refers to a process as "...something which occurs over time and involves change over time". (p. 97). The basic social process refers to those changes that occur which "...account for variations in the …pattern of behavior" (p.97). In grounded theory research there is the assumption that people in common circumstances have social psychological problems in common that are a result of their shared life experience (e.g., men who are divorced or divorcing). This basic problem is addressed through the social psychological process (i.e., the variation in the pattern of behavior). The discovery of the basic psychological problem and the basic social process, the BSP, is a major goal of grounded theory research. This discovery is made through the careful collection, recording and analysis of data, as described below.

Research Participants

This study used purposive, or purposeful, sampling. Persons typically studied in purposive samplings are individuals who have responded to or experienced a common

or central phenomenon. The choice of participants is aimed at maximizing information and providing context and patterns, as opposed to looking forward to possible generalizations. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), the purpose of the sample and data collection "...is to generate theory, not to establish verifications with the 'facts'" (p.48). Purposive sampling is done with the intent of beginning the generation of theory.

This study used criteria-based selective sampling, a specific form of purposive sampling. Rafuls and Moon (1997) suggest the use of criteria-based selective sampling at the beginning of grounded theory research. This refers to sampling based on "...a preconceived set of criteria that originates from the researcher's guiding assumptions and research questions (p.68)". In this case the assumption was that men's thoughts about fathering will change as a result of experiencing the divorce process. The research question was "How do divorcing men's perceptions of fathering change during the transition from live-in, bi-custodial father to noncustodial, nonresidential father?" Therefore, the criteria in this study was that the participants be in the initial stage of divorce and that they anticipate being in the nonresidential parental role.

In grounded theory research, additional sampling is guided by the data as the researcher continues to add participants in response to questions or themes which are identified during data analysis. This is referred to as theoretical sampling. The sampling would continue until theoretical saturation is achieved (i.e., no new information is forthcoming). As a matter of pragmatics this study was limited in regard to theoretical sampling and the possible achievement of true theoretical saturation. However, as an initial study aimed at developing theory, this research should have achieved sufficient saturation to provide a solid foundation upon which future research might be built.

The participants selected for this study were twelve fathers who were currently involved in the divorce process with their spouse. Specifically this meant that in each case a petition for divorce had been filed with the court but no final judgment had been rendered by the court. The choice of twelve participants was based on the premise that in naturalistic research twelve interviews should allow the researcher to reach redundancy, a term that refers to the point where no new information is forthcoming (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The fathers participating had at least one child aged 5 to 12 years old. This age range was chosen for three reasons. First was the belief that during this age range (kindergarten to middle school) "...father's involvement...is a crucial factor in determining whether the child develops the confidence and competence to meet new challenges in a positive manner." (Biller and Kimpton, 1997, p.144). Secondly, eliminating adolescent children would make views of fathering in the future less complicated (e.g., it would eliminate issues related to the significant shifts in parenting style that occur as adolescents begin to assert their needs for independence). The third rationale for setting an age range was to encourage richer data by ensuring more homogeneity within the purposive sample.

Additionally, only fathers who did not anticipate becoming the custodial, or primary residential parent, were selected. This decision was based on the assumption that having residential custody would influence fathering differently than having a noncustodial, or nonresidential, role.

I use the terms custodial/primary residential parent and noncustodial parent since these are the terms used in the 2004 Florida Statues, Title VI, Chapter 61. The

custodial parent is defined as the parent with whom the children have primary residence, while the noncustodial parent is defined as the parent with whom the children do not maintain primary residence (i.e., nonresidential). I also considered the term nonresidential as synonymous with noncustodial. Nonresidential father was the term I used when interviewing and interacting with the participants. I made this choice of wording because I felt it was less harsh, and would be better received by the men who participated in the project. I felt this was important since the term nonresidential was used frequently during the interview process.

The law also refers to rotating custody (e.g., half the year with mom and half the year with dad), but this would still place men outside the co-residential, two parent structure. Combining the custodial and noncustodial groups would confound the issues. The choice to study noncustodial fathers was based on the fact that this group comprises approximately 85% of fathers who experience divorce (Fields, 2000).

The initial plan for recruitment of participants required approaching the Family Court Judge in the Eighth Judicial Circuit to obtain permission to recruit from the court required class for all parents with minor children

seeking a divorce (Florida Statue 61.21). Unfortunately, cooperation from the court was not forthcoming. After much delay, the decision was made to go directly to the public records. Accordingly, the records of the Alachua County Court and the Marion County Court, the Eighth Judicial Circuit and Fifth Judicial Circuit, respectively, were used to recruit participants. The process entailed requesting from the Clerk of Court offices a listing of all persons who had filed for divorce over a given period (e.g., 030104 through 040104). I would submit the list to the records room staff, which in turn would provide the files. The files were then reviewed to determine if the fathers involved in a divorce met the criteria of ages of children and had provided a working address. A letter (Appendix B) inviting the men to participate was then mailed to each person meeting the criteria, along with a stamped, addressed postcard requesting the participant's phone number if he were interested in taking part in the study. The men returning a postcard were then contacted and an initial interview was arranged. In cases where there would be a delay before the initial interview could occur, the demographic questionnaire and consent form were mailed to the participant in advance. After approximately 6 months, I learned I could access all necessary information online

for the Alachua County Court and thereafter all participant information from the Eighth Judicial Circuit were obtained via the internet. No such option was available for the Fifth Circuit (for privacy reasons no addresses were made available on line by the Fifth Circuit).

Approximately 200 letters were mailed out to potential participants. Fifteen men returned the postcard. Of these, one proved to be anticipating primary residential custody, and three could not be scheduled for interviews. The 12 participants represented diversity in age, race, educational level, and socioeconomic status (Table I), though not as much diversity as was anticipated. The implications of this will be discussed in "Limitations of the Study" in Chapter 5.

There also was diversity among the participants regarding the duration of the marital relationship prior to the divorce proceedings. There was minimal diversity in the number of children in the family (11 of the men had 1 or 2 children. There was a range in children's age, but this was of course limited by the design of the study. This diversity among the participants is consistent with the idea of maximum variation sampling (Lincoln & Guba, 1995), which can identify important common themes within the primary group (divorcing fathers).

TABLE I

DIVERSITY OF PARTICIPANTS

RACE
Latino: 3
African American: 4
Caucasian: 5

AGE OF PARTICIPANTS

RANGE	32 TO 60
MEAN AGE	40.3
MEAN WITH HIGH/LOW EXTREMES ELIMINATED	38.9

EDUCATION

HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA	1
SOME COLLEGE	3
COLLEGE DEGREE (B.S. OR B.A.)	5
ADVANCED DEGREE	3

INCOME

RANGE	18,000 to 100,000
MEAN INCOME	45K
MEAN WITH HIGH/LOW EXTREMES ELIMINATED	41.5K

NUMBER OF CHILDREN

ONE	4
TWO	7
FIVE	1

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection occurred in a four step process: a) collection of demographic information through the use of a questionnaire (Appendix C); b) an initial interview with each individual participant, which ended with the assignment of a photography task; c) performance of the

task of the collection of photographs by each participant and d) a second interview with each individual participant.

At the initial meeting each participant was given the consent form (Appendix A) and the demographic questionnaire to complete, a task which took approximately 5 minutes to complete. There were five exceptions to this in the cases where the consent form and demographic questionnaire were mailed to the participant ahead of time. This was done due to a necessary delay in scheduling the initial interview. The mailing of the forms was intended to help engage the participant and ensure his participation in the study.

Immediately following completion of this task the second step, the initial interview, commenced. These interviews were semi-structured and lasted approximately one to one and a half hours. Interview questions (See Appendix D for a list of the initial interview questions) were designed to encourage men to talk about what factors had informed their meanings of fathering (e.g., "Who has had the strongest influence on your thoughts and ideas about being a father?"), what fathering meant to them prior to the current time (e.g., "Have these thoughts about being a...father changed since faced with being the nonresidential parent?"), and what shifts may have occurred in those meanings as a result of the divorce process (e.g.,

"What three words would you have used to describe a father before your divorce became a possibility?" and "What three words would you use now to describe a father?").

The questions took two forms. The most common form was the open ended question (e.g., "What is the most rewarding thing about being a father?"). The other form was the scaling question. The idea for scaling questions comes from the Solution-Focused model of therapy, which was conceived by Steve deShazer (1991, 1985) and Insoo Kim Berg (1994). One goal of scaling questions is to help someone "...become more aware of his current position, where he wants to get to, what he is doing that helps, what he will need to do." (Berg, 1994, p.105). In using scaling questions the interviewer asked the participant to rate something on a scale of 1 to 10 (e.g., relationship with your children, with 1 being not very close to 10 being very close). Follow-up questions to the above scaling questions explored what kept the ratings from being higher, or lower, or what could the participant do to get the rating higher, depending on the participant's responses and the tone of the interview to that point.

The interviews occurred in a cluster fashion. Four participants were interviewed, and an analysis of the data from these interviews was initiated prior to interviewing a

second group of four fathers. The remaining four fathers were interviewed after data analysis had begun on the interviews with the second four fathers. The criteria for placing fathers in any given group was first available fathers. Although interviews were completed on four fathers prior to initiating interviews with the second group of four fathers, it should be noted that all interviews were conducted individually, not in groups of four. The purpose of this format was to allow the data from the first set of interviews to inform the second set, and the first and second sets to inform the final set. This cluster model was designed to promote increased theoretical sensitization, which could help guide successive interviews. For example, a question specifically targeting men's thoughts about the impact of the courts was added to the original list after numerous comments about the court system.

Step three of the data collection began at the conclusion of the initial interview. Prior to leaving the interview each participant was given a disposable camera, with instructions (Appendix E) to photograph situations or scenes that signified fathering for him. The instructions encouraged taking pictures portraying his thoughts about what it meant to be a father before he was considering

divorce as well as his thoughts now and what he anticipated his thoughts to be after the divorce. The instructions also allowed for flexibility in what men would capture in their photos (e.g., themselves as fathers or other men as fathers, or children's behavior as a result of fathering behaviors). Additionally, participants were invited to bring to the second interview any photographs they may already have in their possession which they felt were representative of fathering. The cameras were returned to the researcher for processing and readiness of the photographs prior to the fourth step, a follow-up interview with each participant. The pictures were intended to give a visual display of meanings, allowing further exploration of fathering with the participants during the second interview. This is consistent with what Ziller (1990) referred to as the photo assisted interview. The pictures were not intended to be interpreted by the researcher, but to provide a catalyst for conversation and exploration of what was important to the father that led to the taking of any specific picture.

The fourth step was a second interview with each individual participant, again following the cluster of four format. This second interview focused on two areas. One purpose of this interview was to discuss and explore the

meanings of the photographs. A second purpose was to clarify responses or further explore areas identified in the initial interview. The second interview also served as a form of member checking to help establish the trustworthiness of the study. The questions in both interviews were guided by sensitizing concepts developed prior to the interview. It was anticipated that there would be approximately 3 weeks between the first and second interviews, allowing time for both initial analysis of the first interviews, and the retrieval and processing of the cameras. This proved to be the case with the majority of the participants. There were three participants who had the film developed themselves as a matter of convenience. These men were reimbursed for cost of the developing.

The primary method of data collection in grounded theory is the interview process (Creswell, 1998). Accordingly, my study employed the interview of individual participants as the primary method of data collection. Each participant was interviewed two times as noted above, with the exceptions of two men who dropped out of the study prior to the second interview. All interviews were tape recorded, with two recorders operating simultaneously to ensure accurate capturing of the entire interview for later documentation. Since all participants were interviewed

twice, sensitizing concepts developed as a result of earlier interviews were incorporated into the second interviews with earlier participants. This format was consistent with the concept of constant comparative analysis, a significant feature of grounded theory methodology.

Sensitizing Concepts

Sensitizing concepts are constructs that help focus the researcher as he or she collects and analyzes data. They provide guidance and a sense of reference in approaching the data (van den Hoonaard, 1997). The original idea of sensitizing concepts suggested that they would evolve from the data. Blumer, who first identified sensitizing concepts, suggested they could provide "directions along which to look" (in van den Hoonaard, 1997, p.3). Regarding directions along which to look, sensitizing concepts can be developed prior to beginning data collection and analysis through the researcher's knowledge of the literature and personal experience.

The sensitizing concepts employed initially in this study were informed by the work of: (a) Walzer (1996), who looked at, among other things, gender socialization influences on fathering, (b) Daly (1995), who studied the impact of role models on men's fathering ideas, and (c)

White (1994), who examined men's recollections about their own fathers. In addition, personal influence in the formulation of concepts stemmed from my experience both as a father and as a single father, and my experience as a provider of the parenting class for divorcing parents. As a single father I had primary residential custody of my children. This reflected my strong belief about staying involved with your children after a divorce and what it means to be a father. Interview questions such as "What makes a good father?" likely came with an expectation of what would be a good answer as a result of my views. Likewise, a question such as "In what ways, if any, has your changed role as a father impacted how you think about yourself?" evolved from a belief that the change would have an impact on self image. In the analysis stage, I believe the emergence of properties regarding the role of the mother and accommodation was influences by my experience with participants in my Parent Stabilization class. However, personal experience is somewhat of a double edge sword in qualitative research since it may also contribute to researcher bias. Addressing potential bias is discussed later in this chapter and in Chapter 5.

There were five initial sensitizing concepts used to guide inquiry and analysis of how men's fathering changes

over the divorce process. These were: a) the relative influence of various factors which could inform fathering such as the relationship with the mother, amount of contact with extended family, work perspectives, or peer group involvement; b) the process of retrospection, or looking to the past; c) the process of projection, or looking to the future; d) interaction, or linking of various factors (such as those noted for relative influence); and e) gender socialization of the father.

The first concept, relative influence, was evident in such questions as "Who has had the strongest influence on your thoughts and ideas about being a father?", and follow-up questions to explore responses that might give a hierarchical sense of impact of past or current experiences. Analysis of data occurred with an eye toward statements that might indicate the importance of specific influences (e.g., "My dad...because he was always there."). A second concept was retrospection. With this concept in mind, questions were asked that encouraged the research participant to explore the past (e.g., "When did you first think about becoming a father?"). References to the past were also noted when analyzing the data ("...when I was a teenager...oh yea..."). The third concept was projection. Guided by this idea the researcher asked questions with a

future orientation (e.g., "How do you think you will rate your relationship with your children in five years?"). Similarly, when analyzing the data I was sensitive to references to the future or possible future events. The fourth concept, linking or interaction, appeared in the interview as questions and responses to questions that suggested connections. These connections could be between past and present experiences (e.g., "How do you think your wife initiating the divorce might influence your thinking about fathering after the divorce?"), between two similar experiences (e.g., "How might you compare...?"), or any multitude of possibilities that could arise during the interview or analysis of the data. Gender as a sensitizing concept influenced how all data was analyzed. This sensitization was prompted by the work of Arendell (1995), who found gender socialization to play a major role in how men viewed their divorce. As noted earlier, the cluster model (interviewing in blocks of 4) allowed for the possibility of other sensitizing concepts to evolve from the data as analysis occurs, thus fitting the original idea of Blumer.

Data Analysis

Analysis followed the principles of constant comparative analysis characteristic of grounded theory

research. Analysis began with the coding of the data. Coding procedures are "...the operations by which data are broken down, conceptualized, and put back together in new ways. It is the central process by which theories are built from data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.57).

Coding occurs at three levels. It is important to note that this model of a three level coding process is not necessarily sequential in nature. The coding at all three levels can and should be done recursively as the new data is analyzed, and that proved to be the case in this study. This recursive approach to analysis is an integral feature of the constant comparative method of data analysis in grounded theory methodology.

The first level of coding is referred to as open coding. This type of coding specifically looks to name incidents, activities or episodes through careful examination of the collected data (the transcript) on a line by line basis. The data is reduced to discrete parts, examined to identify differences and similarities, and questions about the data are asked to further clarify its meaning. The pieces of data are then categorized according to the similarities or differences, and the properties of the categories are identified.

The second level of coding is axial coding. This type of coding requires efforts to restructure the data in new ways by identifying connections between categories and their subcategories. A goal is to find relationships between properties of categories. This tends to move the data toward a more abstract level. An example of this would be the properties of accommodation and justification and their relationship to separation. Several of these men accommodated the mother of their children in an effort to preserve their ability to be with the children. They would then justify the accommodation. Both of these activities were related to the separation from the children the men experienced. Specific examples of accommodation and justification will be presented in the next chapter.

The third level of coding, selective coding, is intended to further condense the data, producing theoretical constructs. The patterns of these constructs result in the theory, which should be 'grounded' in the data.

When the researcher feels all codes are complete and no new conceptual codes can be identified, theoretical saturation has occurred. At that point, the basic social process has been determined and the writing of the theory can begin. In this study I did not discover a true basic

social process. This will be discussed in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

Memoing

Throughout the data collection and analysis process, memoing was a key activity. Memoing is the researcher's efforts to record thoughts, questions, and ideas that could come to mind during the research process. Memoing can take the form of personal notes (what the researcher thinks) or observational notes (what the researcher sees). Memos can be theoretical or methodological in nature. The goal of theoretical memoing is to further conceptualize what is happening in the data and identify the basic psychosocial process and emerging theory. Methodological memos serve to help modify or clarify issues concerning the research process. Additionally, memoing is helpful in establishing trustworthiness, the qualitative equivalent of "reliability and validity" by creating an audit trail to document the data collection and analysis process (See discussion under Reliability and Validity). In keeping with this approach, I made frequent memos during the course of the study. Many times these occurred as written notes immediately after leaving an interview site. More often they were made during the transcription of the interviews, and during analysis of the data/transcriptions.

Protection of Participants

Each participant was presented with a consent form for their review and signature. After reviewing the form and having the opportunity to ask questions, participants were asked to sign the form.

Confidentiality of the participants was maintained by avoiding the use of identifying names during the collection of data. Transcribed material was to be identified by number only. This was the case in only one interview as I turned out to be the person transcribing all other interviews. (Possible implications of this single interviewer/transcriber model are discussed in Chapter Five) Cameras and processed film were identified by number, corresponding to initial interview number to allow for appropriate follow-up.

I assumed there would be minimal risk to the participants in this study. However, as a safeguard I had reached a verbal agreement with the Alachua County Crisis Center for follow-up referrals to be made available to the study participants upon request if anyone experienced any difficulty as a result of the research process.

Initial approval for this study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of the University of Florida (Appendix F). However, the initial approval was for the

original plan to recruit participants via the court required classes as discussed earlier. The necessary change in approach to obtaining participants was also presented to the IRB, and approval for the change was obtained. Renewed approval for the use of the informed consent form was also obtained in December of 2004. This became necessary due to the prolonged nature of obtaining participants for the study.

Reliability and Validity/Trustworthiness

Reliability and validity in qualitative research have different meanings than the same terms in quantitative research. Whereas quantitative research can use statistical analysis to help establish reliability or validity, qualitative research has no such option. Several authors have offered alternative terms. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) use the word trustworthiness synonymous with reliability and validity. Lincoln and Guba (1985) use the term trustworthiness, but also suggest the concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability might be used.

Merriam (1988) suggests a number of ways in which researchers may enhance reliability in qualitative research. The first of these is to clarify their position by identifying biases and stating their theoretical

position. The second idea is to make sound informant/participant choices (e.g., interview divorcing fathers if you want to learn how the process of divorce impacts men). A third idea is what Merriam calls triangulation. This involves using multiple sources of data. The multiple sources of data for this study included interviews, observation of men's reaction during the interviews, and the use of photographs. The fourth way to enhance reliability is to create an audit trail. This refers to the keeping of records of interviews and observations, and also records of personal memos used during the recording and analysis of data. The original tapes of all interviews, copies of the transcription of the interviews, and copies of all memos were maintained accordingly.

Validity in qualitative research can be strengthened through long term observation, repeat interviews, discussion of results with the interview participants, and through 'thick description'. Thick description results from good data collection and data analysis. It is required in order to avoid the spurious or quick conclusions that could lead to doubts of the study's validity (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Another technique to enhance trustworthiness is the use of member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This refers to checking back with participants to elicit feedback on ideas the researcher has developed from data collected and analyzed thus far. In this study, member checks occurred at the second interview with each participant.

Researcher Bias

In qualitative research, the researcher is the research instrument, or instrument of data collection. This situation makes it critical for the researcher to examine his or her own possible biases. I identified two potential areas of bias I would need to monitor closely. These were my own divorce history and my role as a provider of one of the local Parent Stabilization classes required by the courts for all divorcing parents with minor children.

My personal history strongly influences my particular biases. I divorced the mother of my two children when they were five and seven years old. The divorce agreement stated that I was to have primary residential custody of my children, with liberal visitation rights granted to their mother. As a single father I am acutely aware of my preconceived notions regarding fathering. For example, I strongly believe that fathers need to be involved in the

lives of their children. I further believe that divorced fathers need to make whatever sacrifices are reasonable to remain involved in their children's lives. It was these types of personal beliefs that I needed to monitor during data collection and analysis. Although my personal experiences served to increase my theoretical sensitivity, I believe there is a fine line between having one's prior knowledge and personal experience inform the analysis versus shape the analysis.

I also had concerns regarding my status a Parent Stabilization class provider. My experience in the classroom has only served to strengthen my views about parenting after divorce. There were times during the interviews when I had to censor myself from being a teacher in order to allow the interview to proceed. Interestingly, I had no trouble complimenting the men who recounted stories of appropriate behavior, but hesitated to point out problematic behaviors.

I chose for this study single fathers who would not have residential custody. This choice was made mainly due to the percentage of fathers who are the nonresidential parent. However, the choice was also made in part based on the assumption that these men would have a different

experience of post divorce fathering than mine, thus allowing some buffer from bias.

I also made the assumption that change would occur for men during the divorce process. I believed that change would occur as a result of the changing structural relationships with their children (e.g., living outside the home). This assumption was based in part on my personal experiences with men in the nonresidential parenting role, in part from reading the literature, and in part on my belief in the tenets of symbolic interactionism.

However, it was important for me to remain highly cognizant of my own notions/biases as the data was analyzed. There were four safeguards I used to protect against bias: 1) self-monitoring; 2) monitoring via my doctoral committee; 3) member checks; and 4) peer debriefing.

The first safeguard was constant self monitoring of personal reactions to the participants and their responses, and the noting of these responses for further exploration. This occurred mainly through self refection at the end of each interview. Fortunately, all of the men who participated in this study voiced values similar to my own. This spared me the task of monitoring any negative feelings

I might have had if their views had been opposite or less similar to my own. However, following each interview I would review my impression of the participant, then mentally step back and try to see things from his perspective. Memos were written as reminders and for possible further exploration as noted above.

This exploration was a part of the second safeguard, discussion of the analysis and my personal reactions with the chairperson and/or members of my doctoral committee. This turned out to be mostly discussion of my personal reactions (e.g., researcher versus therapist issues), and were mostly discussed with one committee member.

The third safeguard was discussion of the emerging findings with the participants themselves during the second interview, a procedure known as member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Follow up interviews were used to check out such early impressions as the issue of guilt, or the role of failure for these men.

The final safeguard was peer debriefing. Peer debriefing is the use of professional peers not involved in the research who "...ask the difficult questions that the inquirer might otherwise avoid..., to explore methodological next steps..., and to provide a sympathetic listening point for personal catharsis." (Lincoln & Guba,

1985, p.283). I had secured two persons to serve as peer debriefers. I chose one male and one female, in an effort to add another female voice in what otherwise is a study with predominantly male voices. One of these was a co-worker that I saw on a daily basis Monday through Friday. The second was a long time colleague that I met with weekly. Our conversations were somewhat informal as they often occurred spontaneously. Issues discussed included the balance between researcher and therapist, the possible reasons for the poor response rate, and the role of conflict in the relationships these men had with their wives or children. For example, I had several discussions with one of my peer debriefers (the co-worker) regarding the men's values and how they may or may not reflect general attitudes of men in our society.

As the study progressed I found I had little difficulty separating my experience as a divorced father from that of the participants. This may have been a result of entering the interviews and analysis with an acute awareness of the difference in my situation as compared to the situation of the men I interviewed. I believe it also was in part a result of the clear differences in the stories these men told surrounding their divorces and the

resultant arrangements with their children, in comparison to my own story.

However, I quickly became aware of a bias I had not anticipated, that of being a therapist first and a researcher second. I entered into this study with the belief that my experience as a therapist would prove beneficial in the interview process. I instead found I was censoring myself when I felt I was moving too much into therapist mode during the interviews. (On at least one occasion this was necessary when a participant expressed suicidal ideation.) For example, in situations where men appeared to become emotional or upset, I would respond with statements, or worse, ignore the possible underlying themes of what was being said. I found myself avoiding the use of questions, which as a narrative therapist would be the more common response, in order to not elicit "more of the story". This was often done at a conscious and deliberate level, and often left me feeling afterwards that I had, without intent but through the nature of the interview, pushed these men toward territory they had not intended to enter only to leave them standing on the edge to find their own way back. The ethical principle of do no harm was often in the back of my head as I went through the interview process. In retrospect I believe it was more the

principle of justice (treat all clients equally) that was my concern. These men were not my clients, and as such would not be followed by me, as would be the case with true clients. This sense of not knowing what would happen to them was problematic for me. Although I had conversations with a committee member and my peer debriefers, I was unable to completely ignore a sense of pushing ethical limits as I juggled the two roles of therapist and researcher. Suggestions to some of these men that they seek someone to talk with and the knowledge that the Alachua County Crisis Center was available to serve any men who experienced problems as a result of the interview process did not alleviate my concerns. I found it ironic that part of my rationale (being a therapist) for not doing a small pilot study turned out to be one of the more problematic issues during the study.

Summary

This chapter discussed the use of grounded theory methodology as the design of this study. It discussed the rationale for choice of participants and the recruitment procedure to obtain participants. Sensitizing concepts and the analysis of the data, including the use of memoing, were then discussed. Steps taken to protect the

participants were reviewed. The chapter ended with a discussion of reliability and validity, also referred to as trustworthiness in qualitative research.

CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS

The structured interview questions used in the interviews with the participants were designed to elicit information regarding the men's thoughts and feelings about fathering. Although the men did talk about their children and the relationship with their children, they also seemed to have another agenda. All of the men talked extensively about the demise of the marriage and their relationship with the mother. At times there was talk about the marriage and the mother before I had addressed the first question on my list. Once the questioning from the prepared list had begun, the men often went off on tangents that would explain their responses. The history of the marriage, difficulties in the marriage, and the particulars of the break up were commonly reported.

I was struck by how quickly a relationship seemed to develop between myself and the participants. They all showed a willingness to share their experiences, readily telling me about affairs, alleged abuse, and the shortcomings on their part that they believed had

contributed to the demise of the marriage. My impressions were that some of the men had agreed to participate as a way to tell their side of the story. One of the fathers did state at the end of the first interview that he had decided to return the postcard because he thought "...it might be helpful to have someone else to talk to". A number of the men made comments after the interview that led me to believe the experience had been somewhat cathartic. One father, following the second interview, said, "(I) enjoyed talking with you...(I was) able to get some of this stuff off my chest." He was not alone in making comments that implied the story telling process had been helpful.

The willingness to share so quickly made me aware of the possible vulnerability of men at this early stage of the divorce process, and the impact that this sense of vulnerability may have had on the poor response rate. The men's willingness to talk may just as easily be seen as a need to talk. I wonder if some of the men who chose not to participate may have felt unready, or may have felt too strong a need to protect themselves from discussing their experience so early in the divorce process. Again, further research to learn more about the reactions of the men who chose not to participate could be useful.

I also think the possibility of the men's use of the interviews to tell their story contributed to my struggles with the therapist/researcher role which was discussed in chapter three. As a narrative oriented therapist, I firmly believe that just the telling of the story can be therapeutic. However, as mention earlier, it left me feeling stuck in regards to helping the men deconstruct what I perceived as harmful stories, and assisting in the reconstruction of more positive stories.

Despite the time the men spent telling me about their marriages and their relationships with their soon to be ex-wives, they did talk about their children as was the intent of the interview. The following ideas emerged from those parts of the conversations.

Among the men that were interviewed in this study I believe all felt a strong commitment to remain involved in the lives of their children. The remainder of this chapter will outline the findings which led to this believe. I will begin this chapter by identifying the categories and subcategories that emerged from the data analysis. Each category will be described, with references to summarized participant responses and verbatim participant responses to show how the thinking that led to the properties and categories evolved. Following this I will review some

general findings from the demographic questionnaire and the interviews.

Category Identification

The purpose of this study was to start to develop a theory on how men's perceptions of fatherhood changed as they went through the early stage of divorce process. In this regard, the design of the interviews provided valuable information. With the intent of exploring how men's perceptions might shift, several of the questions were designed to learn how these men defined fatherhood (e.g., "What makes a good father?", "What makes a bad father?", "What is the easiest or most difficult thing about being a father?"). These questions were followed by questions such as "How do you think the divorce might impact this?" or "How do you think being the nonresidential parent might impact this?"

None of these men believed that their divorce would change their views about fatherhood, as regards the cognitive or affective domains. There were actually a number of men who preempted the follow up question regarding the impact (i.e., answered in a manner that made the follow up question unnecessary). For example, the question asking for them to give three words to describe fatherhood was actually worded as "What three words would

you have used to describe a father before your divorce became a possibility?" Several men began their answer by saying it would be the same before and after the divorce or possibility of divorce. One father responded to the question by saying:

> ...to describe a father...see I'm...I'm gonna be honest with you, it's not any different to me before or after, because to me it still deals with consistency, it deals with having a goal of what I want her to be like, and treat people and do, and, and I'm gonna say church because I think that's real important. If I had three things to put down that would be it. And even after the divorce it's still consistency, the church, and you know, makin' sure she's doin'...that I'm raisin' her the way I think she should be raised...is how I look at it. And I haven't changed that even in the divorce.

Those men who did not preempt the follow-up question of "What three words would you use now to describe a father?" and reported no change did so with varying degrees of emphasis in their responses. Some of the 'softer' responses would include phrases like "well, I'd probably still use those same words because...", or "I don't think I would change my words. Um, love, care and responsibility. Yea, pretty much...".

A more emphatic response, which was delivered enthusiastically, is illustrated by this father of two boys who had this respond to the question of changing his three words to describe a father after the divorce:

> Oh, of course (it won't change), of course. Just because me and their mother don't get along... anymore...doesn't mean that's changed with the children. Absolutely not, no.

Despite the self expressed consistency in their beliefs about fatherhood, close analysis of the interviews (the data) did reveal effects on their patterns of thinking about fathering as a result of the divorce. These patterns formed the basis for the categories that were identified. These are discussed below.

Two primary categories emerged from the data. I have labeled the first category separation. I also consider this category to be the social-psychological problem (Hutchinson, 1988). As a result of their shared common circumstance (going through the divorce process and becoming a nonresidential father) these men share a common problem. The category of separation seeks to identify that common problem. Within this category I identified two less prominent categories. The first subcategory is men's perceptions of the factors contributing to the separation. The second is the effects of the separation. The first subcategory included the following properties: a) the divorce proper, b) the role of the mother, and c) the role of the courts. The second subcategory is the effects of

the separation. Four properties emerged from the data that formed this subcategory: a) missing the child/children, b) loss of parental influence on the children, c) displacement, and d) emotionality.

The second major category identified was labeled coping strategies. Four properties also emerged to form this category. These were: a) determination, b) pursuing interaction, c) justification, and d) accommodation. The two primary categories will now be discussed.

Separation

For these men, the question (e.g., problem) was, "How do I maintain or increase contact with my children"? Since all of the men involved in the study were considered the nonresidential parent, their time with their children was limited in comparison to pre-separation contact (when they were a residential parent). Even those men who anticipated or had arranged through mediation for very liberal and generous visitation time with their children expressed concerns about their limited contact. For these men, their contact and time with their children was still greatly reduced in comparison to pre-separation contact. Overall, no matter the arrangement for visitation, the level of conflict with the mother, or the actual time spent with the

children, these men all appeared to feel separated from their children in contrast to before the separation from the mother and the pending divorce.

Contributing Factors

Three properties emerged to form the subcategory regarding factors which appeared to contribute to this sense of separation. These were the divorce proper, the role of the mother, and the role of the courts.

Divorce proper: The design of this study dictated that all men participating would be nonresidential parents. It was believed that this would assure that all participants would have decreased physical contact with children in comparison to their status as residential parent prior to initiation of the divorce or separation. This proved to be the case with the twelve men who participated in the study.

All the fathers in this study expressed strong intentions to keep contact with their children and be a part of their lives. They were consistent in their behaviors and plans which indicated they were fighting, or willing to fight, for their right to be with their children. In the interviews a frequent topic of discussion was the thoughts and feelings these men had as a result of no longer living with their children on a full time basis.

The idea that these men were not comfortable in this new part-time status is further supported by their responses to the question "What advice would you give to fathers who are going through a divorce and are faced with being the nonresidential parent?" Almost all participants responded by advocating staying involved with the children. The comments ranged from advice to not get divorced (keep the family together for the sake of the children) to fighting in court for time with the children. Following is part of the conversation I had with one participant:

> Participant: My advice is, is, never... leave your children. And what I mean by that, even though I know they're out of the house, but what I mean is always be part of their lives. Just because you and their, and the mother don't get along anymore, doesn't mean that...you have to stay away from your children. They're your children, you need to take responsibility for them too, but you need to be with 'em. But you need to be part of the children's life, I think that's very important.
> Interviewer: Number one thing, huh?
> Participant: Number one thing.

From another father came advice that was more succinct and to the point in advising other fathers should "...Fight for time with their kids, don't give up any time with their kids."

Yet another father was somewhat more introspective in his advice:

> I'd advise them to look into their particular unique situation and see...if...there's the potential...circumstance to make them not be a father they want. ...to kind of anticipate that what might potentially happen, that might prevent you from being a father.

What I inferred from the interviews was that all of these men would prefer to be full time fathers. This led to the property of divorce proper being included as a factor in the separation category.

Role of the mother

> The kids would love for me to come over but she won't let me…set foot in the house.

Several of these men felt their ex wives were keeping them from seeing their children. They described the mothers in ways that would characterize them as gatekeeper moms. As discussed in Chapter two, the term gatekeeper mom refers to a mother's efforts, conscious or unconscious, to limit a father's involvement with his children. This sense of the mother's interfering with fathers' ability to be with their children appeared to be related to the amount of conflict these men had with their former partners. The father who reported the conflict level at "25" (the scale was 1 to 10) also reported he had not seen his children "..in over a month". As he stated at one point:

> She doesn't...she doesn't let me see them. I mean this is...this is a nasty thing we're going through. It's a nasty divorce...very bitter.

Another father complained that the mother would not let him take his sons on vacation, thus depriving them of seeing their great grandmother who was literally on her death bed. An extreme example is that of the mother who "pulled" the child from school and moved to another town, unbeknownst to the father who did not know where his son was for nearly 2 months. Not surprisingly, some of these men were looking forward to finalizing the divorce because they felt they would at least get some freedom from what they perceived as arbitrary decisions by the mothers. This was ironic, given the concerns several of these men had regarding the fairness of the courts.

Role of the courts

> The damn legal system is making us crazy, it's just ridiculous.

The above quote summarizes the feelings of several of these men. Although there were varying opinions about the impact of the court system, many of these men felt the court contributed to their sense of disengagement from their children as a result of what they felt was a bias of the court to give primary residential custody to the mother. Several of the men said they would have wanted custody, but were afraid,

or were advised, that seeking custody would be a long, expensive battle which they could not win. These men seemed to share the belief that, "...it (custody) always goes to whoever has primary custody at the time of the divorce gets primary custody of the child.", which for these men meant the mothers would get custody. They also seemed to share the belief that, "...as a father we (are at), a disadvantage in terms of the law, and I have the impression that the law...most of the time on the side of the mother."

Another common theme was their fear of the impact of prolonged court battles on the children. One father's experience incorporated both the feeling of bias in the court and concerns about the possible impact on his children:

> It would have to be legal maneuvering and go and fight her in court for the rotating custody or fighting for primary custody, but, um, I didn't want to put the kids through that and even though the negative feeling are there for her, I didn't feel like it was going to be healthy for either of us to spend all that money on attorneys and the rest of the whole mess and it's like, you know I just, uh, that's the only way I felt that I could...see, I had to make peace with the situation. I said OK, I've got decisions to make after talking with a whole bunch of attorneys. Everybody pretty much told me the same thing. You're screwed anyways, you're a guy.

There was a lot of frustration voiced as a result of some of the men's experiences with the courts. A father of two boys expressed his thoughts in this way:

> Well, what I don't like is the fact that the court doesn't consider, you know, both parents, I mean I wanted joint, I wanted the rotating custody 'cause I said I'm sorry, I've done nothing wrong in this marriage. I mean I didn't cheat on you, I didn't hit you, I didn't abuse the kids, I didn't abuse you, ...I just felt like that sucked, 'cause I'm still their father, and I should have been given an opportunity to be, you know, have rotating custody.

Despite these father's feelings regarding court impact on time with their children, this did not necessarily translate to the court impacting their ability to be a father. As one father put it, "...there's not a law that can limit me from being a father."

Effects of the Separation

The second subcategory under separation was the effects of the separation. I identified four areas where men experienced the impact of divorce. These were: a) missing the children, b) loss of parental influence, c) displacement, and d) emotionality (the emotional response).

Missing the child/children: Men's reaction to missing their children ranged from anger to a sense of sadness to suicidal ideation. This reaction to missing their children, or loss of time with their children was present even for those men who had negotiated significant time with their children. One father who reported the custody arrangement as allowing him to have the children at least three, and on alternate weeks four, nights a week still had this to say:

> I'm gonna miss out on things. I mean there's gonna be things, little things that they do that I won't even know they do. I mean, on a daily basis, I mean they probably did some...cute or funny or...bright things this weekend that I'll never even know about, I'll never have seen, I never, I...and that pisses me off.

What was often expressed as missing was the contact these men had become accustomed to having with their children. For one father, whose ex wife was actively limiting his contact, the feelings were expressed as follows:

> ...you know it makes me feel uncomfortable, in that uh, I'm missing something, I'm missing, I'm missing them 'cause I don't see them as much as I'd like to during the school year, Uh, I used to take them to school in the morning, so at least I saw them everyday...

I also got the impression that missing the children affected the men's mental health. One of the

more subtle examples of this comes from a father who had quite limited time with his children, who said:

> I miss that, that comfort that I could touch them. Cause they're there, or I could talk to them while they're there, and not being there, that uh, it's horrible, just having them for weekends.

The most extreme example of the impact of disengagement came from the father of a 6 year old son, who had on occasion gone for several months without any knowledge of his son's well being when the child's mother would disappear with his son. This father, who described his relationship with his son as "...he's all I have, and he was my whole life.", reported stretches of time during which he was sleeping on average about two hours a night, and going for a week and a half at one point without "saying more than about three words". This same father also expressed in our interview that he had suicidal ideation (I proceeded to complete a lethality assessment, also during the interview, and it was deemed the father was at a very low lethality level).

A number of studies (Lehr & MacMillan, 2001; Wu & Hart, 2002) have reported men's adjustment difficulties following divorce and some of these men appeared to have problems as a result of their

children's absence (i.e., missing the children). More will be said about this in the section on emotionality.

Loss of parental influence: For many of these men the loss of proximity and daily contact was interpreted as a loss of influence on how the children would develop. Some of these concerns included educational concerns, religious concerns and concerns about basic social behaviors like proper table manners and respect for adults and others. Some of the fathers perceived this as a lack of control:

> just reminding myself that, you know, that I'm part of the boys' lives but I only can, I only have so much control of their lives now. When they're with their mother I have no control of what they do. I only have control of what they have here, and you just always have to keep that, and remind yourself of that.

One father's concerns were related to his awareness that his daughter was quite capable of manipulating the situation (e.g., operating under differing rules in the two households) to her benefit:

> I can't have any influence over that over here. You know I tell (my child) to be respectful, do what she (the mom) says kind of stuff you know, but you know how that goes. She's gonna play the female, she'll play 'em, because she knows how to do that. ...she knows that they're not gonna be as..stubborn as I am. (The mother and grandmother will not be as disciplined I guess is another way to put it, so, you know, ...

Concerns for lack of consistency (e.g., rules and punishments) were also expressed. This is not surprising considering several of these men identified consistency as a characteristic of good fathering (i.e., good parenting).

> And I think that (my child) needs that, cause I don't know that she's gonna get that... all the time. You know, if I was around her all the time she would get it all the time, but I think it's important...

Despite the number of examples of loss of influence the men described, I was unable to identify any specific responses the men had to that loss. However, there has been work which indicates this loss of influence, what Braver (1998) refers to as parental disenfranchisement, can lead to fathers distancing themselves from their children. This raises the question of how this sense of loss of influence will impact these men over time. Perhaps this is an area which needs to be addressed more in the Parent stabilization type classes. Ultimately, I believe this is an area where future research could be helpful.

Displacement: Some of the men who participated in this study expressed a sense of being displaced. This was at times due to leaving the house where they once

had been a part of an intact family and a residential co-parent, and finding their own apartment. There were also instances where men felt a fear of being displaced as a father when the mother had begun dating again. One father referred to himself as a "backseat dad" as a result of his children's mother moving her new boyfriend into her house.

This sense of displacement also appeared to be related to conflict levels. A father of five, who had a particularly contentious relationship with the mother and had not seen his children in over a month, voiced his feelings as follows:

> I can't really say that now I even feel like a father. I feel like, I just feel like a man who's fathered five kids. I don't feel like a father any more.

Recent work by Catlett et al (2004) studied the issue of men's reactions to the change in physical space following divorce (i.e., displacement). In her study regarding physical space, she found that men felt disempowered as a result of no longer living together as a family. The men in this study showed both similarities and dissimilarities to the men in the Catlett study.

The men in this study voiced similar concerns in response to the change in physical space (moving out of the home with the children). The men talked about missing the opportunity to share bedtime with their children, help with homework, and other day to day activities. Men in both studies also shared some of the same problems regarding a sense of the mother interfering with their ability to see their children.

What appeared to be different was the response most of the men in my study had to moving out of the house at the time of the separation. Catlett's study indicated men felt a significant loss as a result of having to move. The men in my study appeared to take the change more in stride. There was the case of one father who felt he could not have his son stay with him because of his roommate situation, and one father who would stay at his parents house during overnight visits because he felt it would be "...more familiar and more comfortable..." for his daughter. However, a number of the men in this study took very proactive roles in responding to the move out of the family home by intentionally establishing homes to share with their children. One father showed by means of a photograph how he had removed the door from his

daughter's bedroom in their old house and brought it to his apartment to help ease the transition for is daughter. Another father spoke of how his duplex was a much safer place for his sons during the hurricanes that came through North Central Florida in 2004. At least two of the fathers in this study reported that they had agreed to the mother to remaining in the pre-divorce house as a way of stabilizing things for their children (though one did take issue with tying up his share of the equity in the home).

Another area where the men in this study differed from the Catlett group regarding change of physical space was the issue of identity and role perception. In response to a specific question of "In what ways, if any, has your changed role as a father impacted how you think about yourself?", the majority of the men in my study reported there was no change (with the one exception being the father quoted above). These responses are in contrast to the Catlett study where both identity and role perception were problematic for the fathers.

Finally, the men in Catlett's study reported a loss of power and control. Although there appeared to be a sense of loss of control (i.e., power) for some

of the men in my study, most seemed to express a determination to regain some of that control. What is in question would be whether the men sought to establish equal power with the mother, or regain what Catlett suggests is a pervasive sense of power among men in marriages. None of the questions in my interviews were designed to provide or elicit information about the participant's feelings of power and control prior to the demise of the marriage and pending divorce. This made relative comparisons in gauging the sense of loss of control/power difficult.

Although I include displacement as a factor contributing to the category of effects of the separation, I believe it is weak as a property. I would have liked the opportunity to further explore this property with men in future interviews using questions designed to specifically explore the issue of changes in physical space, thus either confirming or dismissing it as a property.

Emotionality: These men expressed a range of emotional responses as a result of the divorce and being apart from their children. In large part the emotional responses of these men appeared linked to the conflict they experienced with the mother. Only

two of the participants rated their conflict as low as 1 on the scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being low or no conflict. The results of conflict were expressed in ways that could be interpreted as frustration, disappointment, annoyance, or exasperation, to name a few of the feelings these men had. However, it appeared that the most common emotion resulting from these conflicts was anger. The other commonly expressed emotion was a sense of failure.

Considering the levels of conflict the men reported on the demographic sheet, I was not surprised at the number of men who expressed anger about their situation. What was a bit surprising was the men who reported they were not angry (e.g., reported little or no conflict), but told stories about their soon to be ex-wives that belied their stated lack of anger. Of the twelve participants, eight had indicated on the demographic questionnaire that the conflict level was 5 or greater (on the scale of 1 to 10). One man indicated the conflict went off the scale, writing in a 25. Often these men felt that the conflict was having a negative impact on the children, either because they witnessed arguing, or because the mother would say detrimental things about them as fathers as a result of being angry. They frequently voiced the thought that the

mother's anger was contributing to their limited ability to see their children, thus contributing to their sense of disengagement.

A number of the men in this study also talked about their sense of failure. This failure was not necessarily a sense of failure as a father, but more often a sense of failure as a result of the divorce. (One father referred to himself as a "good father but a lousy husband".) On two occasions the failure was a sense of not meeting the expectations of their fathers. One father voiced his thoughts in this was:

> as a father to my dad, I feel like I have failed. 'Cause none of his kids have ever been divorced, no one in his family has ever been divorced...

Some of the men also expressed a sense of failure regarding the parental unit ("...we failed her as a parent unit thing.") and as a family. One father spoke of how he and the mother had "...absolutely failed..." to do things as a family that could have preserved the marriage.

The issue of failure is critical for these fathers in view of the research that indicates divorced fathers may be at risk for depression and other problems. The short time frame of this study

did not necessarily allow the impact of this sense of failure to manifest. Nor did the short time frame provide adequate opportunity to observe the men's response if the sense of failure were to continue. However, the possibility of these type reactions can be seen in the thoughts expressed by this father:

> I think of myself as being a failure. Somewhere on the line I failed. And I feel very, very, you know...every night I, in retrospect I look at it, I say where have I failed, why have I done this, and you know, what happened? It's not a once in a while thing, it's a thought that just, is entertained by me every night, everyday.

None of the men expressed the belief that their children saw them as a failure. However, there were scattered comments that I inferred as concern that the mother would present the father as a failure. More data would be needed to confirm or dismiss this idea.

Coping Strategies

The second major category identified was coping strategies. Contributing to this category were four properties, or strategies for coping with the problem of separation. I labeled these: a) determination, b) contact, c) justification, and d) accommodation.

Determination

I use the term determination to define the attitude several of these men seemed to adopt in regards to their efforts to have contact with their children. The idea of being "100% dad", or "giving 100%" (and in one case "150% effort") was shared by a number of these men. One father stated it thusly:

> And then..my goal,...and to get through this, was to resolve to be...like the best divorced dad there is out there. And that's what I'm gonna do.

For some of these men their determination took on an attitude of defiance in their approach to staying involved with their children. This attitude appeared to be present in two circumstances. First, when there was high conflict with the mother of their children several of these men appeared more determined to have their fair share of time with the children. As one father put it, in discussing the fact that his wife initiated the divorce:

> If nothing else it made me more belligerent about it. I'd rather be, well, I want to be in her face all of the time. No, no, I'm not going to wither, and go away...if nothing else I'll be more aggressive, more aggressive. Uh, and make sure that I do have, uh, my rights.

The idea of increased conflict translating into increased determination or defiance is significant in view of the fact that 8 of the 12 men rated the

conflict level with their former spouse to be 5 or higher.

The second circumstance occurred if a father felt the court was interfering with his ability to be with his children he tended to become more adamant about his rights, as exemplified by the previous quote: "...there's no law that can limit me from being a father".

Contact

In this study I define contact as fathers being in proximity to, and doing something with their children. As such, contact is synonymous with Lamb's (1985) ideas of engagement or accessibility. This definition would also fit into Palkovitz's (1997) behavioral domain of involvement. Although several of these men identified aspects of fathering in the cognitive and affective domains which were described by Palkowitz, and a number of the men also spoke of the importance of their role as provider, or financial supporter, direct contact appeared to be critical in helping these men feel a part of their children's lives.

All of the men in this study placed a high value on being able to physically be with their children. During the initial interview all of the men made many references to the importance of actual contact with the children.

This contact took the form of playing or having fun with the children, assisting with educational activities (most frequently homework), caretaking or nurturance and discipline. These men also made frequent references to the importance of seeing their children smile, hearing them laugh, and the pride in just watching them perform routine tasks. These examples all require physical proximity. Historically, most of these men did not feel like a father until after the birth and the actual presence of their new child. The question "When did you first feel like a father?" frequently received responses such as "...when ...I was holding her..." or "I actually ...held (my son) in my hands." All of these current and historical activities require direct contact in order to take place.

Their verbal accounts of the importance of contact were supported by their use of the photography to "take pictures of what fatherhood means to you", which was the primary instruction given when the cameras were dispersed. There were pictures taken of homework or schoolwork and talking on the phone with a daughter who called with a problem. One father took pictures of his step-daughter's (Note: this was the daughter of the women he was divorcing, and he had been in the step-father role for 14 years) soccer banquet, but for the most part these men took

pictures of, "...our favorite things to do." Pictures in the pool together, in restaurants, at baseball games (as spectators), or other forms of playing together were the norm. I am aware that it is relatively easy to take a picture of a behavioral activity, and more difficult to capture cognitive or affective activity on film. However, with this difficulty considered the majority of the activities depicted were fun type activities that required fathers to be with their children. Therefore I felt the pictures were further indications of the importance of contact for the men.

Although I believe contact to be an important property in how the men coped with the separation from their children, it is important to note that the contact did include working on homework and being available to talk and listen to their children. These contact type behaviors differentiate these fathers from nonresidential parents who have been termed Disneyland Dads. This type of parental contact is characterized by leisure activities (Stewart, 1999). The men in this study seemed to want more meaningful relationships with their children than just playtime. How this might translate into future involvement is another area worthy of future research.

Justification

It appeared on numerous occasions that these men were justifying their decisions or behaviors. This also appeared to be related to a sense of guilt. I came to this tentative conclusion based on two findings. First, there were a number of men who expressed a feeling of failure as a result of the divorce. The second finding was the number of men who reported that their wives had initiated the divorce, but in our conversations they reported they had moved out of their own volition prior to any filing for divorce, or even talk of divorce. Although this idea of guilt and rationalization (the term I used to describe the process at the time) was one of the conceptual ideas that I took back to several of the men (member checking), no one agreed that this was occurring for them. Despite this lack of corroboration from the participants, I was unable to dismiss this as a property. What ultimately occurred was the renaming of the property as justification to eliminate the pejorative connotations of the word rationalization.

Justification appeared to occur in two areas, leaving the family/marriage and leaving the children. Most of these men indicated on the demographic sheet that their wives had initiated the divorce. However, as noted earlier, it often turned out that the men had been the one to leave

the house, without a request to do so, or had filed with the court for the divorce. As a result, a number of these men seemed to be working to justify leaving the marriage. One father, in discussing his decision to leave the marriage, stated:

> I think it was... better for me to, uh, walk away... than sit there and have them watch us argue all the time, you know yell and scream at each other every day, all day, you know, so I just thought that enough is enough. We tried counseling, everything, nothin' worked, so, uh, I just threw in the towel and walked away.

The second area where justification seemed to occur was in the area of leaving the children. One father, who reported his relationship with his son to be less favorable than his relationship with his daughter, took the following view:

> He's a mamma kid. He just love his mother. ...There's nothing wrong, I was like that, I was my mamma kid.

A possible twist on this theme was what I thought might be an effort to justify the nonresidential role by seeing an improved relationship with the children. "If anything it's made my love for my children even stronger because I miss them so much" is how one father expressed his thoughts. Another father viewed his changed situation as follows:

> There's less distractions here than if we were trying to do it with the mother-in-law around, and with, you know, the wife around and stuff like that. I think that makes a huge difference. You know cause now we, we can...she (daughter) doesn't have to play us. And her and I can concentrate on just her and I stuff. And we don't have the distractions of ...

At least one father was willing to report the other side of being a nonresidential parent. He looked to the positive side and acknowledged that on the weekends the children were with their mother he was able to "get more things done" for himself.

Accommodation

Another concept that emerged from the data was what I considered to be accommodation. A number of the men described behaviors which appeared to accommodate the mother. Despite the underlying conflict and the common attitude among the men to fight for their rights as fathers, a number of the men showed a willingness to give in, or accommodate the mother. There were references to giving in or not fighting on issues in mediation, and being conciliatory in conversations in an effort to keep the peace. However, this accommodation seemed to occur when the men felt the accommodation would be in the best interest of their children. The accommodation also appeared to be related to the level of conflict, often being

utilized by men as a way to decrease or avoid conflict with their soon to be ex-wife. As one father stated when discussing child support issues:

> I don't see...that she is fiscally responsible enough that she won't tap into that a little bit for things that I don't think are a kids priority, but I'm not going to have...I will never have that discussion with her.

What I also saw as accommodation was the willingness of some men to adjust their schedules or enduring other hardships in order to spend more time with their children. One father drove to the middle of the state in order to pick up his daughter on weekends. (To be fair it should be noted that the mother was driving from South Florida to drop off their daughter).

The issue of the strength of the data to support accommodation as a property was considered. However, as was the case with the property of displacement I chose to include it as a contributing factor in making up the category of coping strategies.

General Findings

All the men who participated in this study were invited to do so via letter. Thus, those men who chose to respond to the letter self selected to participate in the study. A review of the demographic characteristics found

similarities in age, income, education levels and number of children. I believe this similarity in demographic characteristics contributed to several similarities in the beliefs and experiences of the participants. These similarities included: a) fatherhood readiness, b) the influence of their own fathers, c) their thoughts regarding what makes a good father and d) the stability in their views about fathering as they are going through the divorce process.

Readiness in this context refers to these men's sense of preparedness and their willingness to take on paternal responsibility (Marsiglio, Hutchinson and Cohan, 2000). With two exceptions, all of these men reported that they felt ready to be a father at the time their wife's, or in one case, partner's, pregnancy became known. This readiness took two forms. A number of the men felt that being a father was something that was "natural", and readiness was not an issue. One father of a 6 year old son said, "Being a father comes from your heart and soul, it's not something you learn." Another participant expressed it as follows: "...it's a natural instinct where you have a child, a child becomes a part of you, and you do anything for the child."

In contrast, other fathers spoke of the planning and preparation, including up to 7 years of marriage before the decision to have children as illustrated by this father's statement:

> I would say...probably about after 6 or 7 years of being married we talked about it, and decided it was 'time' to have a kid. So it was a planned...let's have a baby.

It is worth noting that the one of the participants who was an exception to this readiness trend talked about how he and his wife had discussions about starting a family before she became pregnant. His denial of readiness also took the form of, "Are you ever ready to be a father?" followed by light laughter.

I would speculate that the fatherhood readiness of the men contributed to their apparent determination to be involved in their children's lives. However, I did not feel there was enough evidence to incorporate this as a property in any of the categories (i.e., no strong connections could be found).

Another commonality among these men was their view of their own father as a major influence on their views of fathering. In response to the question of "Who has had the strongest influence on your thoughts

and ideas about being a father?" all but one of the men stated that the most influential person was their father. There were varying amounts of enthusiasm in offering their father as the primary influence. Although most of the men reported positive experiences with their fathers, a number of the men reported that some of what they learned from their father about fathering was not positive, and that they had made concerted efforts to avoid similar behaviors. As a result the men tended to model positive experiences or compensate for negative experiences (Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004).

For the most part, these men primarily reported they learned responsibility (e.g., provider role), and discipline from their fathers, but also reported that their fathers were caring and concerned parents.

Mothers were also reported to be a strong influence, though usually secondary to fathers. The mother's influence tended to be more on the soft side, with talk about traditional mother roles. Several men described their mothers as the caretakers of the children, applauding their mother's ability to manage a household. Other characteristics ascribed to mothers were patient, nurturing and soothing. Siblings, other fathers, church doctrine,

classes in college (that addressed gender issues) were also identified as influences. One man identified his grandfather as his primary influence, and as such was also the only father who did not report his own father as an influence. A review of his statements reveals he considered his father as an absent father. When combined with his thoughts about being a good father (e.g., "...to define a good father...um...I like to spend time with my daughter, make her feel secure, and uh,...I love it."), I would argue that in fact his own father was an influence, but from a negative learning perspective. This father appeared determined to stay involved in his daughter's life and not repeat his own father's patterns of absence.

As noted earlier a number of the men expressed a sense of failure. For some this failure was tied to what they perceived as the expectations of their fathers. This prompts yet another question for me, "What is the relationship between the men's sense of failure and their determination to be involved (e.g., a good father) as an effort to prove something to their own fathers".

The question "What do you think makes a good father?" elicited a variety of descriptive qualities. Examination of these varied responses revealed there were two main themes present, involvement and dependability. I realize I

use the word involvement at risk of being confusing or appearing to be stating the obvious, but this fit what these men were saying. Involvement for these men was defined by responses that implied thoughts and behaviors such as showing an interest in your children, listening and trying to understand their thoughts and feelings, the ability to help shape and influence their thoughts and feelings, and loving your children. Listening and communicating were particularly important aspects of fathering for a number of these men. Comments such as "Being a good listener" and other reports of conversations with their children were salient.

Dependability was chosen to describe the second theme (while acknowledging that one must be involved in order to be dependable) for its literal meaning of trustworthy and reliable. The words consistent, consistency, provider, and responsible were all given as responses, as well as at least two men using the word dependable. Trustworthy and reliable (i.e., dependable) seemed to encompass what these men were trying to say.

These two themes were repeated when the men were asked to choose three words to describe a father. Words like dependable, caring, listener or listening, consistent, honest, provider, nurturing and love or loving were

repeated by several of these men. Not surprisingly, the question "What makes a lousy father?" brought responses opposite of the good father question. Uninvolved, not being around, or "doesn't care" were the most frequent answers.

What I found interesting is how these men expressed their views of fathering. They frequently used terms that would fit into the realm of "sensitive fathering" (Lamb, 2004). Using Palkovitz's (1997) conceptualization of fatherhood reveals that these men's ideas about fathering frequently fell into the cognitive and affective domains of involvement, which I believe are more reflective of sensitive fathering. Palkovitz's model viewed men's experiences of involvement with their children as occurring in three possible domains: a) a cognitive domain, b) an affective domain, and c) a behavioral domain, with these domains being co-occurring experiences Examples of the cognitive domain would include planning, monitoring, or reasoning. The affective domain would include feelings and emotions. Behavioral domain examples would be those observable manifestations of involvement, such as play, teaching, or conversations. Although these men's experiences in the behavioral domain were important (as indicated by the photographs), their verbal accounts of

fathering showed the strong cognitive and affective experiences that these men felt.

The theme of cognitive and affective domain involvement was also evident in questions regarding what were the easiest, hardest, and most rewarding aspects of fathering. For example, communication or listening to the children was mentioned as the easiest aspect by several men, and being able to watch children's growth and the pride that came from seeing them accomplish things were commonly reported as most rewarding aspects.

I believe the relationship between the men's tendencies toward sensitive fathering and their determination to remain involved may indicate these men are dealing with what Catlett and McKenry (2004) refer to as the hegemonic ideal. Although gender issues were apparent (to be discussed in Chapter 5), these men appear to be adopting more equitable and egalitarian approaches to their nonresidential parent status. How this works for them over time could hold keys to how men's involvement can be kept constant and not decrease over time.

I also believe this recurrent theme of responses that fit the cognitive and affective domains of involvement has possible implications for how we as professionals approach

the issue of nonresidential fathers. These implications will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Summary

Twelve men self selected to participate in this study. It was determined that their similarities in age, income levels, educational levels, and number of children produced similarities in the data retrieved. These similarities included their sense of readiness and their common agreement that their own father had been the primary influence on their fathering. They also expressed similarities in how they perceived a good father, and the words they chose to define a father. There was a consistency across these men in the stability of their thoughts about fathering despite the pending divorce.

Analysis of the data was done using the principles of grounded theory methodology. Data was initially coded using open coding and axial coding (Levels I and II). This analysis produced two primary categories. The first of these was separation. This described the problem these men experienced as a result of not spending as much time with their children as they had prior to the initiation of the divorce. Two subcategories also emerged under this

category. The first of these was factors influencing the separation. Properties which helped form this category were the divorce proper, the role of the mother and the role of the courts. The second subcategory of separation was the effects of the separation. Properties here included missing the children, perceived loss of influence, displacement and emotionality, or the emotional response.

The second primary category was coping strategies for dealing with the separation. Properties of coping strategies included determination, contact, justification and accommodation. Further discussion of the findings will occur in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

This chapter will briefly review the findings of the study. It will then discuss the issue of researcher bias. The chapter will also discuss general observations made during and as a result of the study. Limitations of the study will then be addressed. The chapter will close by discussing possible applications of the study results, and implications for future research.

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this study was to begin development of a theory on how men's perceptions of fatherhood change as a result of the initiation of the divorce process and the change to nonresidential parent status. The expectation was that the study would generate an evolving theory that could provide information useful at both a practical level (e.g., structuring of divorce classes), and theoretical level (e.g., by offering an increased understanding of fathering and suggesting areas for continued research).

Although this study was conducted following the principles of grounded theory research, it did not generate a basic social process (BSP), the goal of grounded theory

research. In order for a BSP to be identified certain criteria must be met. The primary criteria are that the BSP must be a process, and have "...two or more clear emergent stages." (Glaser, 1978. p.97) In this study no clear process emerged which fit this most basic criteria. This was in large part due to the design of the study which did not allow for true theoretical sampling to occur. In grounded theory research, the collected data is analyzed using the constant comparative method. This refers to ongoing analysis and use of the coded data to direct continued study. A part of this direction includes expanding the sample to gather and incorporate new data that the researcher recognizes as necessary to fill the voids in the data that are revealed by the analysis, thus generating a more complete picture and grounding the theory in data. As noted in Chapter 4 there are limitations to the sample of this study. Despite this awareness, no effort was made to seek out those fathers going through the divorce process and facing nonresidential parenthood who would fit outside the profile of the men who did take part in the study. As a result true theoretical sampling did not occur. It is because of the short time frame between interviews, the limited sample size, and the lack of theoretical sampling, thus the lack of theoretical

saturation, that a basic social process could not emerge from the data.

What did emerge from the data were concepts that did fit much of the criteria of core categories such as relating to each other and the properties of each other, recurring frequently in the data, and appearing to be a dimension of the identified problem (Glaser, 1976). Expanding the study through the use of theoretical sampling could eventually allow either of these to emerge as a true basic social process. However, I was hesitant to call either a core category due to the limited data. I chose instead to consider them primary categories.

Two primary categories emerged from the data. I labeled one separation. Separation was the condition that resulted from these men's leaving the residence of their children on initiation of the divorce process. I considered this category to be the common problem experienced by the men in the study. This also was considered to be a possible social-psychological problem (Hutchinson, 1988). As such it was also considered the possible precursor to a basic social process (Hutchinson, 1988, Glaser, 1976). (Since this study did not provide a true basic social process, I use of the term precursor.)

Embedded within the category of separation were two subcategories. The first subcategory included the factors contributing to the separation, which were: a) the divorce proper, b) the role of the mother in the separation and c) the role of the courts in the separation. The second subcategory included the effects of the separation. These effects were identified as: a) missing the children, b) loss of influence, c) displacement and d) emotionality.

The second primary category I named coping strategies. This category outlined the ways men dealt with their separation from their children, and as such was also considered a possible precursor of a basic social process. There were four properties that contributed to this category. These were: a) determination, b) involvement, c) justification, and d) accommodation.

It is my thought that through further collection and analysis of data, the category of coping strategies might well become a subcategory of separation, with some modification of the term separation emerging as the basic social process.

Researcher Bias

The issue of researcher bias proved to be a significant issue in this study. I believe the struggle to separate the roles of researcher and therapist impacted the

collection of data. This in turn limited what I was able to extract from the data. Using the situation presented in this study as a model, I would suggest three methods that the student therapist/researcher might utilize to eliminate or significantly reduce the type of internal conflict that I experienced. These are: a) discussions with their committee chair/members about this potential conflict, b) acknowledgment of the dual role in the consent form the participants must sign, and c) a "permission" discussion with the participant prior to beginning the interview. Let me explain these three steps in greater depth.

As qualitative research becomes more common, I believe faculty/committee members need to be aware that students choosing to conduct qualitative research studies may not be cognizant of the potential conflict of roles that may surface (e.g., therapist as researcher) when implementing their studies. Initiating a discussion of the dual roles involved and the potential ethical dilemmas they may experience might raise the student's level of awareness of the possible difficulties they may encounter. Students could then make an informed choice as to whether or not they feel prepared to address these role dilemmas as they pursue qualitative research projects.

A second step to help reduce the role conflict would be to acknowledge the dual roles in the informed consent the participant must sign. For example, one might acknowledge that the researcher is also a therapist. In this study there was no direct acknowledgment that I was a licensed marriage and family therapist. To clarify this in the midst of the interview could have been disruptive. Initial acknowledgment of the two roles with the participant might serve to make for a "clean" beginning.

The third step I am suggesting would follow the acknowledgment of the therapist role in step two. Prior to beginning the interview process the researcher/therapist would initiate a conversation with the participant where both give permission to address the dual role issue during the interview. For example, the researcher would encourage the participant to interrupt the conversation at any time if they felt it was becoming uncomfortable or too therapeutic. Likewise, the researcher could in turn interrupt the conversation if they became uncomfortable with the direction of the conversation and check with the participant to get permission to continue to pursue a certain line of questioning.

Implementation of these three steps could prove useful in helping future studies using qualitative research be

more productive by eliminating the role conflict issues I experience in this study.

Observations

There were a number of trends that struck me during the course of this research that bear discussion. These include: a) the readiness to be a father these men shared; b) the conflict levels most of these men experienced and how they chose to deal with them; c) the apparent lack of respect for the Parent Stabilization class each had been required to attend and d) the issue of gender, particularly the masculine role themes I felt were running through many of the conversations. I will discuss these briefly in this section.

As discussed in Chapter 4, all but one of these fathers reported that they felt ready to be a father at the time of the birth of their children. More than one thought the question regarding readiness was amusing, referring to fathering as a natural activity which required no effort at readiness. I was left with two questions in regards to the idea of readiness. The first question was what is the relationship between readiness to be a father and willingness to remain in a fathering role after a divorce? Ihinger-Tallman et al. (1993) proposed a theory of father involvement that was based in part on how men identified

with their status and roles as a father. Did the readiness expressed by the men in this study translate into their strong desire to remain a part of their children's lives after the divorce? The second question was more a curiosity about the readiness of those fathers who did not respond to the invitation to participate. This question also had its roots in the Ihinger-Tallman theory. I wondered if the readiness, or lack of readiness, may have contributed to how they saw themselves as fathers and thus influenced their willingness to be a part of this study specifically addressing their perceptions of fatherhood. I believe both of these questions are worthy of further research.

The majority of the men who participated in this study reported high levels of conflict with their former spouses. The level of conflict appeared to impact their ability to see, or be with, their children as a result of what could be seen as gatekeeper behavior on the mother's part. The conflict level also appeared to be correlated to the lack of control these men felt as a result of not being able to see their children. (See Bay & Braver, 1990, for a discussion on the relationship between control and co-parental conflict). This issue of conflict raised two concerns.

First, some of the men in these high conflict relationships reported high levels of constraint when dealing with their former spouse, and efforts to shelter their children from the conflict. However, their efforts to shelter the children included behaviors such as moving out onto the porch before the father and mother would "...go at it...", or sending the kids upstairs so they "...wouldn't hear us fight." I was struck by the naivety these men showed regarding the awareness of their children. These types of comments led me to consider the need to modify the Parent Stabilization class that I teach to put more emphasis on the issue of communication in front of or around children.

The second concern I had about the conflict concerned the possibility of the conflict being the beginning of an ongoing battle. The men in this study all expressed the intent to be good fathers. However, ongoing conflict does impact men's ability or willingness to stay involved with their children after divorce. If the conflict these men reported continued or escalate, over time, what impact would this have on their involvement with their children? Follow up with the participants to assess which direction the conflict level had gone and the impact of that movement on involvement could be valuable.

Also of note were the frequent references to the Parent Stabilization class. The State of Florida requires all divorcing parents with children under the age of eighteen to attend one of these classes (Florida Statute 61.21). A goal of this class implied in the statue is the reduction of risk factors and elevation of protective factors (see Rogers, 2004 and Kelly & Emery, 2003 for discussions of risk and protective factors). Comments regarding these classes were quite negative, with the term 'useless' employed on more than one occasion. One father described the class he attended as "an absolute joke", referring to the instructor as "an absolute moron". Another father who felt the classes would not have an impact on attendees said, "I mean the government can enforce this or that but, you can take the cow to the river, you can't make them drink the water...." All of the comments were unsolicited, as none of the interview questions addressed the classes. This overall attitude was striking to me because one of the desired outcomes of this study was to take the emerging theory and apply it to the Parent Stabilization classes in a manner that might promote more father involvement. The comments these men made confirmed my thoughts that a closer look at class content

and presentation is warranted, both in the research and in my class.

The men in this study presented an intriguing picture as regards gender and socially prescribed gender roles. Many of the fathers at times gave indications of being quite androgynous in their views. They described significant involvement in the childcare and childrearing process, both before and after living apart from their children. One father even reported graduate classes he had taken on gender issues and women's rights had informed his approach to fathering. However, there was an underlying theme that reminds me of what Catlett and McKenry (2004) term masculine hegemony. This refers to men's sense of entitlement to power and privilege in the home. One father in particular held his own mother in high esteem, largely because of her willingness to take on very traditional roles in a house with nine children. There were a number of references to women as "chicks", and other comments that tended to make me infer that some of the men in the study harbored an innate believe regarding their role as a father, and women's roles in relationship to men. Also, despite the use of various references to concepts that fit with sensitive fathering when describing a father, the issue of provider and problem solver was never too far

removed from the conversation. It seems these fathers were not engaged in what Arendell (1997) referred to as "traditionalization" (employing more conventional as a way of coping with divorce), and leaned more toward "innovation" (looking for ways to stay active with their children). However, I believe these men were experiencing the struggle to fit both the traditional role of a father and the more contemporary role that has been evolving in our culture (Catlett and McKenry, (2004). How this struggle early in the divorce process will influence their efforts to remain involved with their children could hold clues on how to help keep nonresidential fathers involved with their children after a divorce.

Limitations of the Study

There were a number of limitations to this study. Two possible limitations of this study were apparent during the design of the study. These were the lack of prolonged engagement and the use of only one person to collect and analyze the data. One major limitation was identified during the process of the study. This was the limitations of the sample and the sampling process.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) discuss the usefulness of prolonged engagement and/or persistent observation in building rapport with participants. They suggest that an

increase in rapport, and trust in the researcher, will increase the amount of information the participants may be willing to share. Initially I believe that the use of the 2 interview format, and the use of photographs (which could add a more intimate quality to the interviews), would allow for establishment of sufficient connection with the participants. In retrospect these men all engaged readily in the first interview, as noted earlier.

Regarding the use of a single researcher, I believe the steps taken to protect against researcher bias also served to lessen the impact of this possible limitation. The use of peer debriefing and member checks in particular addressed this concern. I also believe there was a possible benefit from being the single researcher. Conducting the interviews and doing the transcription allowed me to become intimate with the data. I don't believe this same closeness with the data could have been achieved if this had been a shared experience.

A significant limitation of this study resulted from the limits of the sample. This study was designed as an initial effort to begin development of a theory of father's involvement with their children after divorce. Although the pool of potential participants offered the possibility of diversity in the sample, all fathers who received the

letter inviting them to participate were required to volunteer. Thus only those fathers who self selected themselves into the study were participants. The resultant sample proved to lack diversity in two significant areas, education and socioeconomic status.

The education level of the participants was also striking. Eight of the men in this study had earned college degrees and three of these men had advanced degrees. One of the men entered medical school during the course of this study. Three more men had at least two years, or 'some', college work. Although information about the education level of all divorcing fathers in the Eighth Judicial Circuit was not readily available, I am led to question the participant pool in general regarding diversity of education levels. The Eighth Judicial Circuit is the home of the University of Florida and Santa Fe Community College. The Fifth Judicial Circuit is primarily Marion County, less than forty miles from the University of Florida and Santa Fe Community College, and also the home of Central Florida Community College. I would speculate that the overall educational level in these communities is above the norm for communities that do not house major universities. According to U.S. Census Bureau estimates for the year 2000, the percent of persons with a bachelor's

degree or higher is 24.4. In the state of Florida, that percentage is 22.3, while in Alachua County the percent of persons with a Bachelor's degree or above is 38.7. In this study, 66% of the men had a Bachelor's degree or higher. I also believe these men's exposure to higher education contributed to their willingness to participate. One of my participants was himself a doctoral student (in anthropology), who acknowledged his desire to help me out as a fellow student.

Income levels also need to be considered when looking at the findings. The average annual income of these men was $45,000. It is $41,500 if adjusted by eliminating the two extreme incomes. The median household income in Alachua County in (according to available US Census Bureau data from 1999) is $31,400. This number drops even further, to $28,100, if only Gainesville is considered. Since 75% of the participants were from Alachua County, the mean income is significantly above the norm. Additionally, the mean income in Marion County (according to the same Census Bureau report) is $31,900. The average income of the three fathers from Marion County who participated in this study was $56,100, significantly above the local norm.

Diversity of race was not an issue in this study, as there was a near equal split between Caucasian, African

American and Latino men. Age did not appear to be a factor as regards diversity when compared to the average age of men filing for divorce. The average age of the men who took part in this study was 40.1 years, 38.9 years if the two extremes were thrown out. In comparison, the average age of fathers filing for divorce in the eighth judicial circuit in a recent 2 month period was calculated to be approximately 39 years of age. This tends to confirm that this study did not include fathers on either side of the mean age. These missing fathers (from the data) contribute to the limitations of the study.

The above discussion more specifically points out the issue of the need for a broader sample population (theoretical sampling), and the lack of generation of a basic social process. This is certainly a limitation of the study since this contributed to the lack of theory generation.

Application of Results

The rationale for this study included potential utility in the three areas: a) counseling men who were experiencing divorce, b) the design of parenting classes for persons divorcing with minor children involved, and c) possible shaping of public policy. Despite the small sample size and the limitations outlined earlier, I believe

the findings of this study still bear consideration in each of the three areas.

Counseling

The idea of determination and defiance should be considered in the counseling of men who have conflict with their former spouses, or who feel they must do battle with the courts in order to have time with their children. Though defiance appeared to energize and motivate many of the men involved in the study, defiance could also have a negative effect (e.g., increase the level of conflict with the mother) if not kept in check. Defiance of the courts, if carried too far, could have negative legal ramifications for these men. For example, defying the court by refusing to pay the set child support would certainly create a new set of problems. Finding a way to acknowledge men's determination, and/or defiance, and help them utilize that determination in a positive way, could be helpful for fathers and their children. Additionally, this study also tends to validate previous work which shows that men may suffer psychological distress as a result of divorce and separation from their children. Helping men redefine their involvement with their children in the early stage of nonresidential parenthood may be one way to help them in their overall adjustment. For example, we may need to

rethink the idea of visitation, which I believe is seen by many as a contact issue. This way of thinking places the idea of visitation more in the behavioral domain of involvement and does not readily promote or acknowledge the cognitive and affective aspects of the time men spend with, and away from, their children. I believe that incorporation of Palkovitz's ideas of involvement could prove useful. The findings of this study suggest that men could relate to the ideas of cognitive and affective involvement, opening doors for the exploration of more nonresidential father friendly approaches to visitation and involvement.

The Design of Parenting Classes

The need for a closer look at the overall design of the parenting classes was noted earlier. In regards to specific modifications, I would suggest the findings of this study indicate increased emphasis on dealing with conflict might prove helpful. A recent study by Criddle et al. (2003) indicated that divorce education classes could serve to lessen the amount of conflict. Since both fathers and mothers are required to attend a class (though not together), the role of both parties could be addressed in regards to conflict. Florida Statute 61.21 outlines the required class content and also sets minimum time frames

for the class. The statute does require a component on parental conflict be included. As a provider/instructor of this class I am aware of the constraints to fitting all the material into a time frame that will be reasonable and tolerable for the class participants. The findings of this study, coupled with the findings of Criddle and associates suggest the area of co-parental conflict may need to receive increased emphasis in the classes. We need to find a way to address conflict issues in a manner which might increase the impact on parent's awareness of the possible impact on their children and themselves.

Public Policy

Addressing public policy is always a more difficult task. However, the oft voiced feeling of these fathers that they were not being treated fairly by the courts echoes the findings and suggestions of other authors. Arendell (1995) refers to the "paradigm of victimhood" (p.102) in describing divorced men's thoughts regarding treatment by the courts. A number of these men clearly felt like victims of the court system. I would posit that judges, mediators, and other court personnel would adamantly deny any bias for women or against men. However, a recent study of judges in four states indicated that attitudes still show a maternal preference in making

custody decisions (Stamps, 2002). Unfortunately, the perception appears to be real (and may well be real according to the Stamps study) to these men. A means to address this discrepancy, or perceived discrepancy, needs to be found. More definitive research on the how and why of men's perceptions of being unfairly treated would make it easier to approach the courts to take a closer look at policies and procedures that leave men feeling at a disadvantage before they ever set foot in the courtroom.

Implications for Future Study

Although I believe this study was a step toward increasing our understanding of men's response to the divorce process, there is much work to be done. I will first discuss ideas to improve the current study, and then discuss some other areas of research that were suggested by this study.

Expanding the current study to include more participants would generate more data. I would suggest this expansion should include both number of participants and range of participant demographics, particularly in regard to education, income and age. This added data could lead to additional properties or categories that could contribute to a theory to help explain men's behaviors as fathers after a divorce. I believe that the addition of

questions which specifically explored the men's relationship with their children prior to the initiation of the divorce could be helpful in placing their current relationship in better context. Questions which addressed their response to leaving the house where they had lived with the children and mother could offer valuable information about the impact of the change in physical space. The issue of the timing of this study also should be reconsidered. I feel the short time frame between initial interview and follow-up interview may have been too short. In the majority of the follow-up interviews the men's divorce had not yet been finalized. I think delaying the second interview until after the divorce may have allowed for the impact of the actual divorce to surface as a factor in the men's thinking about fatherhood.

Other areas of future research suggested by this study would include work specifically designed to further explore the relationship between men's readiness for fatherhood and their determination to remain in an active father role after a divorce. All of the men in this study expressed a strong commitment to remain involved with their children, and nearly all expressed a readiness to be a father. The possible connection could be significant in addressing the issue of post divorce involvement of fathers.

The role of children in helping keep fathers involved is also worthy of further study. In this study several fathers made reference to phone calls from their children as the only contact they might have at times when the mother was acting as a gatekeeper. I was left to wonder what direction the relationship would have gone had these children not been initiating contact. Unfortunately, my wondering began as a result of looking at the end result of the interviews, and I did not have the opportunity to pose this question to the fathers who were involved in these child initiated contact situations. Also in regards to children's impact on father involvement, some of these fathers reported their children had voiced a desire to live with them. Additional research on how this impacts men's thinking could prove useful, though perhaps more from a negative perspective in the absence of children making this request.

Yet another area that deserves additional study was suggested by the poor response rate to the invitation to participate in the study. A total of 197 letters were mailed to potential participants. Of these nearly 200 invitations, 15 men returned the card (i.e., expressed a willingness to participate). One of these was the primary residential father (which was learned half way through the

initial interview), thus eliminating him from the study. Three other men were never interviewed as a meeting could not be arranged. This equates to a response rate of approximately 6%. This response rate is extremely low. For example, Lown (1995) used a mailed questionnaire survey to study non-custodial fathers. Her response rate was 33%, over 5 times the response in this study. The question of what kept over 90% of divorcing fathers from responding may hold some clues about father's reaction to divorce, and the perception of fathering as a result of divorce. Research designed to address this question would seem necessary if we are to get a more complete picture of men's response to the divorce process.

This study, by design, only included fathers going through the divorce process. This design did not address all forms of fatherhood (e.g., never married men who father children with co-habiting partners, gay men who adopt children, stepfathers). If we are to find ways to encourage fathers' involvement with their children after divorce, research on men in various father statuses must be addressed.

APPENDIX A
INFORMED CONSENT

PLEASE READ THIS ENTIRE DOCUMENT CAREFULLY

TO: All research participants

FROM: Principal Investigator Bill Farley, Ed.S, NCC, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist

SUPERVISOR: Ellen Amatea, Ph.D.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this research is to study how men's views of fathering may be influenced by the divorce process.

WHAT YOU WILL BE ASKED TO DO: You will be asked to complete an information sheet, which should take approximately five to ten minutes. You will then participate in an initial interview which will last about one hour. At the end of the interview, you will be given a disposable camera and asked to take pictures of what fathering means to you, including pictures portraying your thoughts before you were considering divorce as well as your thoughts during or after the divorce. You will be asked to return the camera to the researcher, who will be responsible for processing the film. You will then be asked to participate in a second interview, again about one hour in length. At that time you will discuss your photos, and also further discuss questions or reactions to the initial interview.

TIME REQUIRED: The two interviews will be approximately sixty minutes each. The time it takes to complete the photo assignment will depend on you, with a guideline of returning the camera in seven to ten days.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: There are no risks anticipated from participating in this study. As a possible benefit, you may develop insights into your ideas about fathering which might help you further strengthen your relationship with your children. However, if you feel that you would like to work with a counselor or other professional as a result of the study, the researcher will assist you in finding an appropriate referral.

COMPENSATION: There will be no compensation given for participation in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. You will only be required to sign your name to the informed consent and will not be required to include your name on any of the photographs. Your interviews will beidentified by number, as will your photographs. At the end of the project, your photographs will be returned to you upon your request.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You do not have to answer any question you do not wish to answer. There is no penalty for not participating.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW: You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

WHOM TO CONTACT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY:

Bill Farley, Ed.S, NCC, LMFT
(352)334-3800 ext. 3814
blfrly@yahoo.com

Ellen Amatea, Ph.D.
1215 Norman Hall, Gainesville, Fl. 32611
(352)392-0731)
eamatea@coe.ufl.edu

Participant: _____Date: _____

Researcher: _____Date: _____

APPENDIX B
RECRUIT LETTER

Dear

I am writing this letter to invite you to participate in a research project regarding how men think about their role as a father during the time of divorce. I am a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and a Doctoral Student at the University of Florida in the Marriage and Family Therapy Program.

Should you agree to take part your participation will involve two interviews, arranged at a place and time of your convenience. The questions and conversation during the interviews will be aimed at understanding your thoughts about your changing role as a father as a result of the divorce. If you are willing to consider being a part of this study please return the enclosed postcard. I will then contact you and explain the project in more detail, as well as answer any questions you might have.

As a father who has been through a divorce, I apologize for the intrusion of this letter during what I know can be rough times. However, I believe this study can provide an opportunity to discuss topics and issues that may benefit you and others. I encourage you to return the card for more information.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Bill Farley, Ed.S., NCC, LMFT

APPENDIX C
DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONAIRE

Age_____

Race or cultural background_____

Income_____

Education level_____

Did your parents divorce (or split up if never married)? Yes___ No ___

How long were you married? _____

Who initiated the divorce? _____

How long have you been separated? _____

How long have you been living apart from your children? _____

What is the approximate distance you live from your children? _____

Age(s) of children?_____ Gender?_____

_____ _____

_____ _____

Are you using an attorney? Yes____ No____

Are you using mediation? Yes____ No____

Please rate the amount of conflict you have with your wife…

No Conflict Extreme Conflict

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- When did you first think about becoming a father?
- Did you feel ready to be a father at the time you learned of your wife's pregnancy?
- (If not, then…) What did you do to get ready?
- When did you first feel like a father?
- Who has had the strongest influence on your thoughts and ideas about being a father?
- Who else has had a significant influence?
- What other factors have influenced your ideas about being a father?
- What do you think makes a good father? What makes a lousy father?
- Have these thoughts about being a 'good' father or 'bad' father changed since faced with being the non-residential parent?
- What is the easiest thing about being a father?
- How do you think the divorce might impact this?
- What is the most difficult thing about fathering?
- How do you think the divorce might impact this?
- What do you think is the most rewarding thing about being a father?
- In what ways do you think being the non-residential parent might impact this?
- How do you think your wife (or yourself) initiating the divorce might influence your thinking about fathering post divorce?
- Do you feel ready to be a non-residential father?
- (If not, then…) What do you think you need to do to get ready?

- What three words would you have used to describe a father before your divorce became a possibility?
- What three words would you now use to describe a father?
- In what ways, if any, has your changed role as a father impacted how you think about yourself?
- Has it changed the way you see yourself as a person?
- What advice would you give to fathers who are facing a divorce, and becoming the non-residential parent?
- Using a scale from one to ten, not very close to very close, how would you rate your relationship with your children prior to the talk of divorce? How would you rate it now? How do you think you will rate it in one year? (follow up questions as indicated)
- Do you think the courts have had an impact on how you father your children?
- Would you change anything about how you have been fathering your kids? If yes, what would that be?
- What are the supports that will help you make these changes?
- What are the constraints to making these changes?
- You rated the conflict level at _X_ on your information sheet. How would getting that down to a lower number affect your fathering?
- My experience….if you were to add anything to what you have said thus far, or are there any questions I should have asked, what would that be?

APPENDIX E
PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

Photo "Instructions"

1. Take pictures of what fatherhood means to you. These can be how it was, how it is, or how it will be.

2. You can take pictures of yourself, your child(ren), yourself with your children, or you can take pictures of other men as fathers. It can be people, animals, objects, whatever strikes you as fathering.

3. feel free to play with the camera. I don't have any interest in the 'quality' of your photography. I just want you to be able to talk about your pictures and what they mean to you. Se if you can have some fun doing this!

4. If after a few pictures you feel you have a good representation of what being a father means, you can stop shooting. You don't have to use all the film. However, if you want to use all 27 shots, go right ahead.

5. Give me a call when you are finished shooting, and I'll make arrangements to pick up the camera.

352-338-3521

Thanks again for taking part!

APPENDIX F
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Title of Protocol: How do divorcing men's perceptions of fathering change during the transition from bi-custodial, residential father to non-custodial/non-residential father.

Principal Investigator: Bill Farley, Ed.S., NCC, LMFT; Doctoral Student, Department of Counselor Education
208 NW 35th Terrace, Gainesville, Fl. 32607
(352)377-5185 blfrly@yahoo.com FAX 352-373-0076

Supervisor: Ellen Amatea, Ph.D., Department of Counselor Education, 1215 Norman Hall, Gainesville, FL. 32611
(352)392-0731 eamatea@coe.ufl.edu FAX 352-846-2697

Dates of Protocol: From 120103 or upon date of permission being granted by the Institutional Review Board to 123104.

Sources of Funding: None

Scientific Purpose of the Investigation: The purpose of this study is to determine how men's perceptions of fathering change as a result of the divorce process.

Describe the Research Methodology in Non-Technical Language: Twelve men who are experiencing divorce will be interviewed regarding their perceptions of fathering, and how it has been affected by the divorce process (see attached addendum for list of questions). Prior to this interview each man will complete a one page information sheet (see attached addendum 'Demographics Questionnaire'). At the conclusion of the interview each man will then be given a disposable camera and asked to take pictures of what fathering means to him. The cameras will take 27 shots, and the men will be instructed to capture pictures of what fathering was before the divorce process began, what it is now, and what they think it will be in the future. The cameras will be returned to the investigator for processing. The men will then return for a second interview, at which time the pictures will be discussed and clarification of comments made during the initial interview can occur. At the conclusion of the second interview, the pictures will be returned to the participant, or destroyed upon participant request.

Potential Benefits and Anticipated Risk: There are no risks anticipated from participating in this study. As a possible benefit, fathers may develop insights into their ideas about fathering which might help strengthen their relationship with their children.However, should any participant desire to work with a counselor or other professional as a result of the study, the researcher will assist you in finding an appropriate referral.

Describe How Participants Will Be Recruited, The Number and Age of the Participants, and Proposed Compensation (if any): Participants will be drawn from men participating in the 8th Judicial Circuit's required class for divorcing parents with minor children. Men with at least one child between the ages of five and twelve years old will be invited to participate. Arrangements will be made with providers of the class to

request permission from men registering for the class to be contacted by the investigator. Phone contact will be made with those men who agree to learn more about the project to determine their willingness to participate. The total number of men interviewed will be twelve. These men would likely range in age, race, and socioeconomic status by virtue of the randomness of participants in the required classes. There will be no compensation for participation in this study.

Describe the Informed Consent Process. Include a Copy of the Informed Consent Document: The consent form would be presented at the time of the first interview. Participants would have the opportunity to review the form and have any questions answered prior to signing the form.

_____ _____

Bill Farley, Ed.S, NCC, LMFT Date
Principal Investigator

_____ _____

Ellen Amatea, Ph.D. Supervisor Date

_____ _____

M. Harry Daniels, Ph.D.
Department Chair, Counselor Ed. Date

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

William Thomas Farley was born in Woodbury, New Jersey on February 27, 1948. He moved with his family to the Wilmington, Delaware area when he was 5 years old. After graduating from high school, he attended Ithaca College, in Ithaca, New York, and received his Bachelor of Science degree in physical therapy in 1970, a profession he continues to practice to this day.

He married in 1973, and had two daughters. His family moved to Florida in 1978, where he earned a Master of Education degree from the University of Florida, with an eye toward obtaining a faculty position in a physical therapy program.

Divorced in 1982, he received primary residential custody of his two daughters. After the divorce and experiences associated with the divorce, ideas of teaching were put aside. He began thinking about career options in the counseling field. His interest in counseling grew during his time as a volunteer at the Alachua County Crisis Center beginning in 1984. He entered the Counselor

Education program in 1985, and received his Education Specialist degree in 1988.

He worked in the counseling field both as an employee at the Corner Drug Store and as a volunteer at the Alachua County Crisis Center Family Clinic, while also continuing work as a physical therapist. In the midst of this, in 1989 he met the love of his life, who he married in 1999.

In 1996 he returned to the Counselor Education Department as a doctoral student in marriage and family therapy. In January 1999 he entered the training program at the Center for Couples and Family Development, completing the program in December 2001.

He returned to the Corner Drug Store in May 2000, where he worked until December 2004. He resigned at that time to pursue building a private practice in couples, marriage and family therapy, and to put the final touches on his dissertation to complete his doctoral degree. Both of these endeavors are supported by a part-time return to physical therapy (and of course his wife, Charlene).

Additionally, he currently is contracted with the Gainesville Family Institute to teach the Parent Stabilization course that has attendance required by the state for all parents who are divorcing and have minor children. He is licensed as a Marriage and Family

Therapist in Florida and is also a National Certified Counselor.

I certify that I have read this study and in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Ellen A. Amatea

Ellen Amatea, Chairperson
Professor of Counselor Education

I certify that I have read this study and in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Silvia C.-E. Doan

Silvia Echevarria-Doan
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I certify that I have read this study and in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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I certify that I have read this study and in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the College of Education and to the Graduate School and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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